

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA



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THE
SENTIMENTAL
VAGABOND

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A. T'SERSTEVENS

THE SENTIMENTAL VAGABOND

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THE SENTIMENTAL VAGABOND

by
A. T'SERSTEVENS

Translated from the French by
WHITTAKER CHAMBERS



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PART I

CHAPTER I

Baccio Cardì

"SHALL we draw up the contract together?" said the publisher.

"If you wish," replied Baccio, making an effort to comprehend. He gazed in a kind of stupor at this man who made books a business involving no greater miracle than the printing of them.

"Have you decided on your title yet? It would be more convenient."

"I think so—"The Flower of Patrician Italy."

The publisher made a face.

"Without meaning to be unkind," he grumbled, "your title hasn't a very scientific sound. And my readers have a horror of fantasy. 'The Flower!' 'The Flower!' H'm. What do you say to this: 'Index of the Ancient Italian Nobility'?"

"But it's not the same thing at all," Baccio ventured. "As I told you, Signor Mosca, I only intend to write about the great families, those

who have left their mark on the history of our country. Among the 'ancient nobility' there are a whole flock who aren't worth the trouble . . ."

"You are right," said Mosca. "But 'The Flower,' my dear friend, 'The Flower'! I'm all in favor of the 'Index'; it sounds more serious. What would you say to, 'Index of the Ancient Italian Patricians'?"

"Just as you like," said Baccio, weary of the argument. "You know that end of the business better than I do."

"Leave it to me, my friend, you will find it quite satisfactory. On the other hand, don't hesitate to make the 'Index' full. As I told you, we'll simply name a tentative time in our contract. Of course, it's to your interest to finish your work in the shortest time possible."

"Of course," assented the author.

"I am building the greatest hopes on your talent," Signor Mosca added. "Is the 'History of the Barberini' your only work?"

"I"—the author hesitated—"I finished the Roman Sapienza at twenty-three."

"Really! But you're thirty, unless I'm very much mistaken."

"Twenty-eight," Baccio corrected him. "My mother . . ."

"All the same that means five years for one little book," the publisher calculated, closing one eye.

"You know it isn't the thickness of a volume, Signor Mosca . . ."

"I know, I know, my friend," gesturing with both his hands, "but it's to your own interest, I repeat, to wind up the 'Index' in shorter order."

"You can depend on me," said Baccio, with enthusiasm.

"Splendid!" exclaimed the big man.

Resuming his verbal drip-drop, he began to write, repeating aloud what he was setting down on paper.

"The Third of May, 1902, between Signor Mosca, publisher, residing at 25 Via Luccoli, Genoa, as the party of the first part, and Signor Baccio Cardì, doctor of history, residing at'—where do you live?"

A visible embarrassment overspread the young doctor's features.

"I—" he muttered; "—you see . . ."

"I see, I see," said the publisher with a paternal

smile. "Don't hide anything from me; I know you're not rich."

"It's not that," murmured Baccio. "I'm stopping with a friend . . . but . . ."

"But, my dear Signor Cardi," continued Mosca in the same tone, "you *do* live somewhere, don't you?"

"You understand," said Baccio with sudden resolution, "my calling obliges me to move about a great deal. I have to go from city to city to consult various works. . . . Libraries are very scattered in our country."

"Ah, I see . . ." said the publisher, smiling, "you're something of a vagabond, eh?"

"Something," the young man admitted, bowing his head.

"Well, I'm not blaming you for it. One ought to see one's country. But then one must work," Mosca added peremptorily. As the young man did not say anything: "Let us get back to business—shall we say at Genoa, then?"

"Just as you like—"

"Between Signor Baccio Cardi, residing at Genoa, address the same, as the party of the second part," the publisher continued repeating

what he wrote, "the following has been agreed: Signor Cardi shall place in the hands of Signor Mosca—we'll leave the time indefinite, eh?" (he received no reply) "the completed manuscript of a work entitled . . . shall we decide definitely to call it 'The Index'? . . ." (He might just as well have been alone in the room) ". . . entitled 'Index of the Ancient Italian Patrician.' All rights of printing, editing and selling the said work to be reserved to Signor Mosca. . ."

Baccio was not listening. Behind the man who sat across from him was an open window, and beyond it, other windows in a motley façade of red and yellow, with various personages painted in fresco below its false scallops: Christopher Columbus, Flario Gioia, Niccolò Machiavelli, Andrea Doria, and Julius Cæsar. Their names appeared in gilt lettering on scrolls.

Between Christopher and the reputed inventor of the compass, the high rectangle of a window opened into darkness. Here from time to time a woman appeared. The sunlight would immediately invest her person and illumine her white bodice, her reddish hair, and youthful face. Once she brought a cage with a bird in it, once a blue

vase filled with geraniums. She shook out a rug of flashing colors. She leaned out over the street and, after a piercing cry, lowered a little basket which returned filled with oranges. She was pretty, somewhat plump, with the big eyes of a placid animal. When she withdrew into the interior of the room, he could catch a glimpse of her feet, rosy in the sunlight.

" . . . in all matters touching translation Signor Mosca alone is empowered . . ." the publisher declaimed in the midst of a silence which he believed to be entirely attentive.

Baccio watched the unknown woman, watched her live, come and go, appear and disappear, flash out suddenly and be extinguished. And as she was so near, without observing him, for the sunlight was glaring between them in the narrow alley, he felt he was touching her, caressing her with his fingers and the palm of his hand, saying sweet, amorous things to her, with silent lips.

" . . . without restricting the number of copies. Each printing to be three thousand . . . and including . . . "

How cool that house must be, with its thick walls and heavy blinds! How good it must be to

take one's siesta beside that woman, to watch the play of light on her bare skin, while the little bird sang in its cage and the breeze made the flowers stir in the blue vase. At dusk, they would sit side by side, their elbows on the window-ledge: the street would be filled with music. The sky would turn rose-colored, then violet, then all bedizened with constellations.

"... ten copies . . . for his personal use. . ."

She did not come back again. The window remained dark and gaping, between the navigator and him of Amalfi. The cage and the geraniums, on the window-sill and the balustrade, became a part of the mural decorations. The apparition, all that had meant life, mobile color, sentimental dreams, was instantly swallowed by the shadow-filled rectangle. Baccio peered into its depths, but nothing was stirring within the soft darkness. He felt as if his soul had been rudely unpeopled, his heart capsized in some bottomless sea of bitterness. . . .

"What are you thinking about . . . ?" asked the voice of the bookseller.

"I don't know," Baccio murmured, suddenly discovering himself once more face to face with

the eminent man. "I . . . I didn't exactly understand."

"By God!" exclaimed the publisher, "I wonder if you've been listening to me at all!"

"Of course I was listening to you, Signor Mosca."

"Well then, it's agreed. I am to give you half immediately, am I not?"

"With pleasure," replied the young man, without having the remotest idea what half the other was talking about. Then, suddenly, reawakening to his interests, "I have a request to make."

"I am listening," said the editor, his thumbs in the armholes of his vest.

"If it's all the same to you, I'd like to—have the payment all in gold."

"Eh! Eh! my young friend! You don't seem to know that gold is rare in Italy."

"Ah!" said Baccio, "gold is rare."

"Terribly! But we'll find some. Just to prove to you that I'm not one of those publishers you authors like to write about, it's agreed,—you shall have your gold."

"Thank you," muttered Cardi, "I . . ."

Mosca made a little gesture of deprecation:

(One understands one's obligations. I would do more than this to please you.) He took up his pen again and continued writing and dictating to himself the wording of the contract.

" . . . undertakes to dispense to Signor Cardi . . . the sum"

In the direction of the window there was a sudden illumination. Starting out of the shadow, the young woman was hanging a white coverlet in the sunlight. The reverberation flashed over the façade, irradiating the great men below the scallops. But Baccio had no eyes for the doge of Genoa, or the conqueror of the Gauls, or the bilious diplomat; he was watching the lovely arms of the unknown woman as they lifted the dazzling cloth. He saw her loins bend without effort, while her throat trembled a little under her muslin bodice. He felt as if he were breathing its honeylike fragrance, and closed his eyes voluptuously.

"And there we have it," said Signor Mosca, puffing as if he had just completed a hard climb. "There's nothing more to do but sign it."

"Sign it? Yes, indeed. What did you say? Ah, that's right," replied the author in confusion.

"Here." With his index finger Mosca weighed down the lower part of the contract.

"A cigar?" said Mosca, when they had both signed, without rereading the text. "But, my dear friend, they're excellent. They're smuggled."

"Thank you, Signor Mosca, I never smoke."

"You have all the virtues," declared the publisher, who was entirely unfearful of commonplaces.

"I'm afraid not," sighed Baccio, gazing at the window where the unknown had remained, leaning on her elbows.

"Diligence, frugality, temperance, thrift," Signor Mosca opined from the midst of a cloud of smoke, "—those are the keys to success."

The lovely girl was singing.

"Woman, woman!

You were born for the sorrow of such as I!

Woman, woman!

Because of you, I shall die!"

"That's how I got where I am," the business man went on. "From publisher's clerk to head of the house of Mosca and Martinengo. . . ."

Her voice was a deep contralto, with tones so moving that they seemed to abrade his flesh as they pierced his heart.

"Are you remaining in Genoa?" asked the publisher, who had probably said a number of things since the girl began to sing.

"I don't think so," Baccio replied. "The libraries in Genoa are very poor, and I have to consult several manuscripts in the Archives at Pisa."

"You can catch a train in an hour. At three-forty-six exactly," declared Mosca, who, constantly traveling somewhere like all Italians, knew the time-table by heart.

"Then I'll go, if I may," Baccio rose without taking his eyes from the window opposite.

The publisher broke into a loud laugh. "You've forgotten your money."

"My money?"

"Certainly, your three hundred lire."

"My three hundred lire? What three hundred lire?"

"Well, I'll be damned! The half of your author's rights."

"That's so!" exclaimed Baccio, seeing the win-

dow closed abruptly. "I wasn't thinking about it. . . ."

How was it that a window's closing could blind the universe, could eclipse the light, could snap the clue of happiness one was following as Theseus once had followed Ariadne's? He no longer even noticed that extraordinary thing—the three little piles of gold coins that a hairy hand was pushing across the table to him. He did not even taste the joy, for him unique, of hearing the gold-pieces tinkle distinctly in the bottom of his pockets. . . .

CHAPTER II

The Sentimental Vagabond

WHEN Baccio reached the street, there were no paintings to be seen on any of the house fronts opposite; no Columbus or Flavio Gioia or Julius Cæsar covered the walls. The fair singer's window had vanished with its cage and its vase of flowers.

He felt he was the victim of some magic spell. For he acknowledged the supernatural, which he had come upon frequently in the lives of great men: flashing signs make their appearance in the heavens; a tower rises suddenly by a sea of tumultuous waves; the moldering doors of a palace open of their own accord; an angel with a drawn sword guards a mausoleum.

Manifestations of this miraculous nature might still occur in our day; all that was needed was that the soul have piercing eyes. Enchantment hovered over things, giving them at times

an almost human effect. At other times, the charm was baleful: deceptive appearances led wise men into error, smiling maidens, delectable tables, rare books,—temptations all, set to lure man from the path of duty.

How many times had he not experienced them, when seated at his work table, the white sheets before him, he suddenly felt himself impelled by some unknown, fatal, unfathomable power towards the paths and highroads, leaving behind him his work, half begun, while he tramped through countryside and city, not knowing where his fruitless steps were taking him! How often, at that blessed hour when the writer is his own master, had he not seen some female face float before him,—gentle or passionate, grave or gay, but, in any case, adorable.

And today, when he was binding his destiny to a new work, the wall had opened up, a singing creature had appeared to him, surrounded by legendary personages. Each of her gestures had rapt him to such ecstasy that he had not even argued, as he should have done, for his most vital interests, his paltry author's rights. Then the apparition had vanished. Nothing remained

to him but the enormous weight of his undertaking and a few gold-pieces.

He did not for a moment stop to think that beyond the offices, the anterooms, the staircases and vestibules of that Genoese house, which was as complicated as a labyrinth, the floor faced slightly about, and that Mosca's window opened on another lane. Would he, even had he understood this, have searched for the unknown? Perhaps he knew too well, how far preferable are dreams to reality, and that it is better to imagine the vehemence of love than to experience its weaknesses.

He no longer sought either the window or the fair one. He bent his steps in the direction of the depot, talking to himself, with abrupt gestures and nods of his head.

People stopped to watch the man who was thus discoursing to himself. Apart from this solitary extempore, there was nothing remarkable about him. His garments displayed that worn propriety so common in Italy where one passes with no transition from threadbare elegance to rags. As signs of personality, one might have noted his soft straw hat, with its plaid rib-

bon, and his shoes which were out of shape, and had shanks of chestnut-colored velvet.

For the rest, there was nothing to distinguish him in a country where manly beauty is so usual. His long face, with its long nose and high forehead, recalled that of Como the First, whom Bronzino painted at Florence. But the princely authority of the Medici was replaced by a dreamy expression apparent not only in his blue eyes, which were very wide open and a trifle protrusive, but in his whole face, even in his whole person, as if dreams had taken possession of him entirely and cast their spell over that big, though somewhat stooped, student's body.

On the Piazza delle Fontane Marose, the light, which suddenly streamed down, and the hubbub from the lines of carts, aroused the dreamer. He glimpsed a Babylon of hanging houses, mounting above their many-colored façades; and overhead, the blue sky, in dazzling immobility.

In a watchmaker's window was a crystal clock that gave the official time, to the joy of the neighboring lodgers. It said thirteen minutes after three. Without haste, Baccio calculated

that he had exactly thirty-three minutes left to catch the train for Pisa.

He lingered to observe the precise working of the wheels, which turned, in their glass box, like captive insects. The second hand had a quick, jerky movement, a little slower than the beating of his own heart, the vibration of which he could feel in his finger-tips. He marveled absent-mindedly for a long time at the ratchet, which let the teeth of the wheel escape it one by one—without stopping to think how his indolence was letting the minutes escape from him.

Had he not thought of it? Since he halted in front of that window, a conflict of instincts and obligations was stirring in the depths of his being; old imperious nomadic instincts, new obligations, self-esteem and necessity. He knew well enough already that his former nature would be victorious, but he continued to oppose reason to it, to exercise, after the fashion of the philosophers, what they call the will.

The omnibus to the depot crossed the square with a great clatter. The clock said twenty-seven minutes past three. Baccio's eyes followed the

sign-plastered vehicle, and watched it swallowed up in the majestic chasm of the Via Garibaldi.

For a moment he was carried away by duty.

He snatched off his hat and ran several steps.

But might not duty still have time to evince itself?

Baccio returned to the clock and again set himself to watching the movements of its organism. Was it really the Pope Gerbert who invented clocks?

In six hours the train will arrive at Pisa, and I shall have something to answer for. But the roads are so lovely in the month of May. To the left there are gardens full of roses; to the right, the sea,—and what an abridgement of luminous length was in that little word!

It was not Gerbert, for a clock with wheels is mentioned in the Chronicle of Ravenna.

The hand, on reaching the half-hour, released several levers, and a copper hammer which struck a single note.

"It's too late now," sighed Baccio. "I can't run as far as the station in sixteen minutes, buy my ticket at the window, and find a seat in the crowd. . . Those trains are always full!"

Turning his back on duty, he retraced his steps as far as the Strada Venti Settembre, with the timid, lagging gait of a man on his way to some daily vice.

He had recommenced his soliloquy, and walked bareheaded, shaking his hat in front of him. The stream of people carried him under the arcades, and the slope of the sidewalk toward the torrent of the Bisagno. Little by little, he recovered his peace of mind, as he surrendered himself to the destiny which was starting him on new journeys to countrysides in flower, to unknown cities and laughing women.

It was in this fashion that Messer Francesco, of the Rovere family, whose arms were an olive-tree vert with four branches, and who produced two popes, used to travel throughout the provinces of Italy in search of simples, and return laden with specifics. He had coaches, litters, pages and kitchen officers, and doubtless more gold in his coffers than he, Baccio, would have in all his life; yet he preferred the solitude, proper to meditation, travel through the countryside and the adventures of the road.

Like that prince, with his pharmaceutical

curiosity, Baccio yielded himself completely to the horizon. He well knew that the vastest distances are surmounted in time, provided only one set one foot before the other, regularly. And, intellectually, that was how the most interminable works were created, how one reached the end of a novel or an index.

He hoped, too, for some surprising encounters, for he had never tramped through the land without meeting nymphs, naiads, melias and other elemental creatures. He believed in them because he saw no reason not to believe in them, and because he thought they must respond to so many ancient dreams. The men of our times are not worthy of their affection, for the supernatural beings who people the forest, who live in the trunks of trees, inhabit caverns, undulate on the waves, murmur in streams, and dance, in the twilight, on hills bathed by the setting sun in violet light,—all those marvelous creatures whom Baccio knew so well, from having so often met them on his travels, reveal themselves to none but the solitary, or him who loves the life of things which open only in silence.

Henceforward, he would have nothing left to

desire for his nomadic welfare, for he had a tremendous fortune on him, with which he could live sumptuously, without giving a thought to the morrow, for a longer time and a longer distance than his feet could ever carry him. He calculated that he had enough for six months, allowing for meat frequently and wine only at his evening meal. The yellow medlars were about to ripen. There were still oranges. The trees in the gardens would furnish his dessert, and then, from time to time, one could be satisfied with dessert only. For to tell the truth, he believed that life is obliging to those who love it, and is constantly interposing in their favor.

Filled with hope, he climbed the hills and descended their slopes, leaving behind him the pink and white town, lying exposed to the light like drying linen. Once more he saw the beach where he had passed the previous night on a heap of nets, in the bottom of a boat. Farther on, the road divided gardens of lemon and orange trees. Their perfume was heavy, for flowers and fruit exhaled their fragrance together, so that the air seemed smothering with it. Baccio found it pal-

pable and delicious,—but, to break his line of march, he set about a vagabond diversion.

Near at hand, the slender tops of two cypresses, leaning one towards another, outlined a blue archway against the sky. It was through this, no doubt, that the soul of Pietro Mangiadore had entered into bliss. Baccio began to recite Dante's verses, the sonority of which filled him again with ecstasy, though he had known their splendor since school days. The beautiful words of the Poet glowed in the falling dusk, like the fruit of the citrus trees.

Beyond Recco, fatigue surprised him. He labored along painfully as far as Ruta, which rides its promontory in such a way that the sea glistens on both sides, between the olive trees.

He wanted dinner and a bed, wine and sheets. He had gold; he could afford lusty joys.

On a little square in the village, he discovered an inn. Before the door, the hostess was knotting lace on a little oilcloth cushion. She smiled at him, as women all smiled at him, doubtless because he was handsome; but he knew nothing about that, and believed in the gentleness of women because of their smile.

When he had seated himself on the steps at the threshold, and they had settled about the meal and the room, she told him of her life. The wooden spindles made a soft clatter. Her husband was in America. From time to time she removed a pin. She had two children, but their grandmother had taken them to Savignonne, in the mountains. When a thread broke, she knitted her eyebrows a trifle, so that her eyes became darker and more beautiful. Her husband had sent her a souvenir from New York. . . . Would he like to see it? . . .

They entered a bar, thick with flies, a room lulled to drowsiness by the swinging of a pendulum. On a table, near the window, he saw a bottle laid on its side, and in the bottle, a tiny three-master, with all its yards and stays, its ship's boat and pennant.

In silence they admired, she, for the hundredth time, her husband's patience and skill,—he, her bent neck, on which the hair cut a sharp pattern, disappearing as down along her spine.

Both stood motionless. The house was empty, the twilight caressing. No one crossed the square in that drowsy village. Baccio made a motion to—

ward her form which was leaning slightly forward, but checked himself and merely said, "It's a schooner. Square-rigged . . ."

"Yes," she stammered, "it's a schooner. My husband wrote me it was. . . See, it has my name."

"Irma, Irma," he murmured, as if he were clasping the woman to him. "Irma! It's a pretty name. . . ."

They were so close, one to another, that he had only to seize her in his arms. Then he moved away, persuading himself that he had no right to take an absent man's wife from him. But when she had left him and he heard her coming and going in the kitchen, he cursed his timidity.

She served him with a glum face. When he had eaten she showed him the stairway, without accompanying him to his room.

Leaning out the window, upstairs, he observed the woman seated before the door,—quite white in the moonlight. He could make out the lines of her body, through the cotton dress she wore: her arms, her shoulders, her throat that seemed breaking a little, the double line of her lap. In the fantastic light, her eyes and mouth were

extraordinarily enlarged and seemed moist with desire.

He drew back slowly and sat on the edge of his bed, his chin in his hands. The moonlight awoke impalpable presences in the room, gray or phosphorescent. But he saw nothing of that mysterious world. He reproached himself for his awkwardness, which was forever thwarting his desires. Whenever he saw a young and beautiful woman, his whole being, body and soul, took wing toward her. But then something always happened. His heart got the upper hand! He would instantly feel himself suffocated with tenderness. He could think of nothing but of laying his head on her soft shoulder and crooningly fondling her. Pent up in him was the bitterness of being a loving heart, with a torment of passions in his flesh. How he envied the daring and the brutal of this earth, who instantly win their caress or their kiss, and are, therefore, even made welcome by women. . . . At least, he thought they are.

All his enjoyment had been spoiled. The wine had seemed brackish, the cooking coarse. The pleasure he had anticipated, of lying between

sheets, lost its savor, now that he found himself alone. So, he lay down in childish petulance, at the foot of the bed, on a straw mat. But he was unable to sleep. He caught every sound in the house: a door closing, a step on the stairs, and close by him, behind the partition, the creaking of the springs under the delicious weight of *her* body. Then he heard nothing but the sea, very far out, and the rustling of the leaves when the wind blew.

He rose without having slept a wink, as soon as dawn colored the sky. He took his boots in his hand and tiptoed down the hall. Before his hostess' door, he halted a long time, his ear to the panel, his breath held. The throbbing of his heart shook his breast, beat in his temples and his wrists.

As daylight spread through the passage, he saw the key gleaming in the lock. He had only to seize the handle and push open the door to clasp the woman in his arms. The thought filled him with such anguish that his knees trembled, and he had to support himself against the door-frame to keep from falling. Again he recalled the daring and the brutal. . . . But the floor creaked. Baccio bounded to the staircase and

descended four steps at a time till he reached the bar where he stopped to listen.

Nothing was stirring upstairs. The pendulum tranquilly measured the silence. All the flies were asleep on the bunches of pimento.

His mouth was dry and his forehead drawn with a splitting headache. On the bar, the little round belly of a wine flask swelled out its straw basket. He seized it by the neck and drained it to the bottom. Revived by the warmth of the wine, he studied his surroundings for a long time. He shook his head over the bottled boat, laid a gold-piece on the bar, drew the bolts of the door, gently, very gently, and when it was ajar, ventured forth one leg. Then his head and shoulders, then his whole body. He found himself alone on the square, breathless and shoeless.

The air was cool. The sky seemed made of porcelain. One star glistened like a suspended raindrop. He discovered the window of his room and his hostess', which was closed with white curtains. He set down his shoes, and covering his fingers with kisses, blew them toward her window. Then he departed, holding a shoe in each hand, without noticing her curtains tremble from top to bottom.

CHAPTER III

The World of Fancy

IN an hour's time, he had consoled himself, for if he suffered from loving all women in vain, he was incapable of feeling any but a rather diffuse sorrow.

Crossing Chiavari, he met three young girls, walking by the road. Two were as brown as chestnuts; the third, who was whiter than milk, had a flame of red hair. Her neck was delicate, her ankles slender, her hands plump. As he passed them, he took off his hat with a low bow, which made them burst out laughing. He fled without turning, his heart throbbing at their youthful beauty. That was how he knew he had forgotten his grief.

The market town of Lavagna, recalling the Fieschi whose seigniory it had been, reminded him of his Index. Suddenly, the whole weight of that work descended on his shoulders. He saw

himself staggering down the highways and the years under the patrician genealogies of all Italy. Day and night he would be conscious of the torment of work or the remorse of not working. All that felicity can mean to man he must renounce for the dubious pleasure of accumulating phrases. Indeed, the enchantment of life, the zest of adventure, the flavor of the unknown, which, like some beautiful fruit, seals into its very substance each day that God makes, all the joy of being a man, and thirty, seemed so vital, so delicious, that he asked himself over and over how men, with senses similarly attuned, could ever have brought any work to its conclusion. They must have been impelled by an enormous vanity or possessed by a garrulous god.

With a wrench, he turned away from his destiny. . . . At Pisa, he put on the harness, since he must; The Hall of the Archives was as cool as a thicket, and beyond the table where he wrote, the pale green of the Arno could be seen. Up to that time, he had walked so many miles on the lovely roads that perhaps he had his fill of it.

Then he saw the highroad, stretching before

him, haunted with each day's mystery and happy adventures.

That day and those following, he had some extraordinary encounters.

Toward evening, he arrived at Sestri and, among the rocks on the promontory, found a spring which formed three or four pools before losing itself in the sea. He blessed the hour and the loneliness of the place, which gave him an opportunity to wash his shirt and his socks.

The sea was rough and beat in long waves against the shore. When he had stretched his wet clothes on the stones, which were still warm, he thought he would like to swim among the waves, and plunged in at once. He went from ledge to ledge, delighted to see his body floating whitely in the transparent water. Then he sat down in a cleft in the rocks and exposed himself to the last rays of the sun.

It was there he saw Maya, the siren,—at least he called her that, for she did not tell him her name or utter a sound of any sort. She was so slim, so bright, so sinuous, that she seemed like the splash of the sea upon the rocks. The blue of

the waves dappled her skin, like a veil that the tossing of the water caused to flutter.

Presently he saw her near at hand, saw her naked. Then she unloosed her heavy hair, which tumbled down with a single plunge, its splendid weight seeming to drag her into the sea. She reappeared again once or twice: she rose up beside the rock and fell gracefully back in a tangle of her streaming hair.

No doubt, she was playing this pretty game for the sole delight of Baccio's eyes, and because he believed in water sprites; for anyone but he would have taken this undine for a wave. But such apparitions were familiar to him. He even saw in them the answer to the problem of his destiny: he saw clearly that he was not made for the women of this world, but for those fabulous beings, nymphs, naiads, sirens, oceanids who people the woods, springs and waves. It was their jealous influence that paralyzed him when he approached human creatures. Yet human creatures had their beauty, too. . . .

Until night fell, he awaited the undine's return. But she did not come again, perhaps because the sea had calmed. Baccio left his niche,

and while regaining the shore, expected to feel the nereid's arms encircle his neck, and her firm little breasts press against his breast. But he experienced none of these marine delights, for night had come, and the daughters of the waves seek love only in the daylight.

Three days later, as he was skirting the Magra, which separates Tuscany from the Ligurian province, at the foot of those hills cursed by the Proscription, he saw a centaur start up.

He cantered down the slope of the hill in the dull glare of the setting sun, seeming to bear away with him the failing light. Presently he halted, turning his muscular torso, then set off again at a heroic gallop, making the earth resound beneath his hoofs.

Baccio waved his straw hat at him, crying thrice, "Oyo! Oyo! Oyo!"—which is, if we may believe Teofilo Folengo, the Mantuan poet, the salute of the centaurs. But this one disappeared without replying.

Baccio was not surprised, for he knew how taciturn centaurs can be. Their habit of haunting solitary places and frequenting caverns has reduced them to this majestic silence: but they

know how to forego it to teach wisdom to the Immortals. Baccio resumed his march, recalling Chiron, the Archer, who initiated Achilles in the conduct of arms and politics.

After walking several minutes, he encountered a naked horseman, leading his horse to bathe. Baccio stopped him to ask if he had not seen the centaur. The man, not understanding a word, but furious at being surprised with no clothes on, replied with abuse, and retreated, blaspheming the Immaculate Virgin.

"There is another of those unfortunates," thought Baccio, "who know nothing of the world of demigods."

He went along, filled with melancholy.

For the last three days, he had been fleeing inns which are inhabited by lonely women and haunted by love. He slept under olive trees, on the meadows, drank the water of fountains, feeding himself on bread and cheese. He had a great deal of difficulty in changing his second gold-piece. The shopkeepers did not want it and demanded paper, regarding the coin with horror, as if they found blood on its effigy. In this way Baccio came to understand the curse that rests

on gold, owing to the crimes which have been committed in its name.

The slow stages he accomplished each day began to tire his legs. But he bolstered up his courage by watching the trains go by, packed with smoke-stifled crowds, and by reflecting that tramping along the highways put off the moment when he would have to begin work. The solitude weighed on him at times, nevertheless, and he courted human speech, however poor its substance might be.

So, without having to be begged, he accepted a place in the cart of a milk-carrier, going from Sarzana to Carrara.

The latter was a little man, covered with sweat, buried in clothes too big for him, and wearing a great felt hat low over his eyes. From under it could be heard confused words and weird cluckings that animated or moderated his team, which consisted of a horse and a mule. The tin cans rattled against each other with the sound of a cracked bell. The animals, who knew the road better than their master, trotted along with the reins on their backs, stopping from time

to time, of their own volition, to snatch some blades of grass from the roadside.

Traveling in this fashion, Baccio and the milk-carrier discussed politics, for long as men have been governed in spite of themselves, they have never ceased debating about government.

From deep within his hat, the milk-carrier conjured up a picture of the restiveness of the Tuscan proletariat whose particular grudge was against industrialists and priests. The people of Carrara were—(Oollah!! This to the animals)—abstentionist, tainted with anarchism, and peculiarly dangerous—(Wa! Wa!)—because they were well supplied with dynamite from the quarries, and liked to plant bombs in the shafts. As for him—(Gloogloogloogloorrah!)—he had no love for these beggars, who made their two lire a day and still weren't satisfied. . . .

Owning three cows and a stable, he was necessarily of the party of order. Baccio, who owned nothing, inclined toward the proletariat, but did not say so, in order not to offend his companion.

"They threw a bomb during the procession in Massa, and sent death threats to the Archbishop

of Pisa, who is a good man, always ready to help the needy."

"Did they kill anyone?" groaned Baccio.

"By luck the bomb didn't explode. But what keeps the government from sending a troop after this rabble?"

"I don't know," replied Baccio who had no acquaintances in the government.

"Wa! Wa!" cried the milk-carrier, cracking his whip.

Then he muttered things under his felt hat, things without any particular significance but intended to reveal the energetic way in which he would guide the Cart of State. "Oollah! Oollah!"

Baccio, quite taken up with the pleasure of riding, no longer talked at all. When the animals deigned to trot, a cool breeze caressed his face. He looked with disdain upon the pedestrians, creeping along in their dust, which in itself was glorious, mounting like smoke and peppering the budding vines on either side of the road. To the left, the landscape spread out in a circle of geometry, with segments of vine and yellow wheat as far as the Apuan Hills whose flanks seemed covered with snow, their marble shone

so white in the sunlight. On the other side, he could see the sea, very clearly, right up to the middle of the sky.

Approaching Carrara, they encountered that longed-for troop: the carabinieri were marching along the road, their guns under their arms, with the listlessness of men going to labor. The milk-carrier rejoiced no longer: he suddenly envisaged probable affrays, and feared the loss of his merchandise. He stopped his team at the entrance to the town, and depositing Baccio on the sidewalk, turned back his steeds, cursing the liberties of the people.

Baccio came back to earth again like a bruised man. His first steps were painful; after which his muscular machine resumed its motions. Again he felt the joy of going as his fancy listed, aimless and objectless, or, at any rate, with an object so vague, so remote, as hardly to deserve being called one.

With each step, he could hear the gold-pieces jingle. He stopped to count them and decide on expenses for the day. He still had thirteen pieces left, plus twelve lire in silver and several big copper coins. The gold represented his stationary

capital, the rest his funds. He placed his capital in his right hand pocket, his funds in his left, and felt satisfied that he had set his affairs in order.

Then he resumed his march, musing on the advantages of literature, which enriches one without effort, while leaving one quite free to roam about the world.

The street opened up to him, step by step, with its wine-shops full and its other shops empty, for the quarry laborers were making common cause with the marble-cutters. Groups were standing at the street corners, the men in their Sunday clothes, weighed down with the boredom of the strike, waiting for orders from their chiefs. Under the chestnut-trees on the Risorgimento, a number of workers were eating ices in front of the Caffé della Posta, with the object of proving to the bourgeoisie that the proletariat, too, knows how to enjoy life. Prostitutes and paragons alike, excited by the flux of revolt, were strutting about in the sunshine, with colored shawls and extravagant coiffures.

The popular party blocked all the streets: the soldiers occupied the other end of the avenues.

Baccio asked himself how people so tranquil, and so removed one from another, had managed to get together here to fight.

He knew nothing of politics save what he could make out from personal deductions. Never reading a newspaper, and living on the roads, or in books of the past, he was quite ignorant of that transient eminence of ministries and principles which stir the masses. So he mingled with the groups with a view to instructing himself in social economy. But all he heard was phrases of a passionate lyricism and a whole compendium of abuse directed at rich men and governments.

On one little square, shut off by the white wall of a church, an orator was clinging to the flanks of a giant Neptune, towering above a fountain. The man was vehemently perorating, flailing his arms freely over the heads of the assembled. From time to time, he spat in the basin of the fountain, then resumed his diatribe. It was a question of the rights of the people, of the high cost of living, of injustices and inequalities, of the impostures of the priests,—all of which Baccio listened to without much commiseration, for he had encountered these things in all ages

of history, always the same, and always presented in the same way, so that he could not doubt but that they were as old as the human tribe.

But the audience, which measured things by its own span of years, greeted each of the revelations with shouts. Their cries echoed so many vain revolts, so many hopes foredestined to defeat, such depths of misery, and fatalities so ancient, that Baccio, forgetting the wisdom of history, felt their collective distress take possession of him. He grasped his neighbor's arm, and both of them, moved by a common anguish, roused by a common indignation, listened to the orator with tears in their eyes.

"Are you not men? Will you endure forever the tyranny of the bosses? Don't you know yet that it is from your toil they wring their wealth? Go across the Magra! Look at the mansion of the noble Castracani! Where is the stone in that palace that is not drenched with your sweat? Where is the tree in his gardens that is not watered with your blood? Is it for this moneybaron, and for him alone, that you toil and get nothing for it, in the hell of the quarries? . . ."

He invoked the dazzling landscape, where

from the arid tops of the hills to the sultry valleys, whiteness reigned, iterating itself in a glaring monotony:—those blocks of marble sliding down the rubble of the slopes above the heads of the gangs of workmen! Never was there a day that someone did not perish in that Gehenna! And all this—labor, sweat, danger, disastrous death—for two lire a day!

Shouts broke forth. Baccio, squeezed among the crowd, no longer stopped to think that never in his life had he hewed marble from the rocks. He shouted with the rest.

"I know very well," the orator concluded, "that there is not a man in this crowd, who is not ready to give his very skin to the sacred cause . . ."

"All, all are!" Baccio roared with the multitude.

"Good," declared the tribune, lifting his hand for silence, "if you do not grudge your lives, you will not hesitate to loosen your purse-strings. The Party is strong, but it needs money. Our propaganda must fight the maneuvers of the capitalists. . . ."

"It shall fight them, it shall fight them! Long live Perelli!"

"You are good fellows," declared the tribune.

"Yes, yes! Long live our faithful Perelli!"

Baccio shouted louder than all the others.

The orator, with half-shut eyes, let himself be rocked on this wave of acclamations.

The god Neptune, one bare foot upon a dolphin, regarded the heavens with majestic serenity.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Perelli when the shouting had abated. "I invite you to give your contribution, however small it may be, to Comrade Livia, our dear and valiant colleague!"

He reached out his hand and assisted a smiling young woman to the edge of the fountain.

"Long live Livia!" shouted the audience, lurching towards the fountain.

"Long live Livia!" cried Baccio, carried forward by the pressure of the crowd.

From as far back as they could see the young girl, they offered her contributions, waving their arms.

She accepted their money with an artless smile, and handed it to her colleague. Her cheeks were

fresh and animated; her hands, pretty with the prettiness of leisure, had dimples in their joints. She had a full bosom, firmly outlined in an orange jersey, and amorous hips. The way in which she balanced lent something fragile and girlish to her whole body. When she stooped toward the outstretched hands, the back of her neck could be glimpsed for an instant under her heavy hair.

Baccio no longer saw anything but her and the movement of her body, each time she straightened to hand the orator a contribution. Again he felt that delicious flutter that had seized on him in Signor Mosca's office, when he beheld the unknown woman at her window; and again at the silent inn, with its bottled ship and night of perfumes and regrets; and the evening when the siren had appeared to him. All his old dreams of kisses and caresses bore down his soul with a load so tender that he was no longer aware of the crowd surrounding him, he no longer heard its cries. His heart throbbing, his lips parched, he found himself borne to Livia's very feet.

"Your contribution, comrade," she said, stretching out her hand to him.

She leaned toward him. Her throat had the heaviness of grapes, hanging from the branches in autumn; her body, the ripe fragrance that slumbers in vineyards.

"Your contribution, comrade," the young woman repeated, touching Baccio's shoulder.

He shuddered as if his whole flesh responded to her appeal. Then he plunged his right hand into his pocket, and, gathering the gold-pieces in one fist, his eyes fastened on the eyes of his dear Livia, his face turned up to her bright face, without a word, but with his poor being atremble with love, he gave her his all, a vagabond's fortune.

She gave a start of surprise but controlled herself at once, and pouring the gold-pieces from one hand to the other, cried, "Look, comrades! Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty, two hundred and sixty lire this worthy man has given for our propaganda! Follow his example, comrades! Don't be stingy!"

She balanced with difficulty on the edge of the fountain, and her young body swayed gracefully.

Ah! if only he, Baccio, could have taken her off in his trembling arms, have clasped her so tightly to his breast that her firm little breasts would have left their imprint on his flesh. Ah, to breathe in her scent like a basket of peaches! To gnaw her juicy lips . . . !

But the crowd of quarry-men kept forcing him farther and farther from the fountain. Above their heads he saw the orange jersey balance for a moment in the full light. Then he was hurried in the other direction by the multitude and pushed into unknown streets.

When he found himself again, he was walking alone down a road that led to the sea. He regretted nothing, neither his time nor his lost money. He was struck with wonder at the beautiful apparition, daughter of the god Neptune, poised at her father's knees, having left the infinite seas to guide mortals toward political folly. Again he recognized the influence of the supernatural, for what he had just done had nothing logical about it.

"She was," said he, thinking aloud, "more beautiful than the women of our country. The way those people crowded about her shows clearly

that she was no ordinary creature. I caught no more than a glimpse of her, yet I was enraptured. I had only the faintest consciousness of what I was doing. I have long known that our earthly women do not move me to such sudden emotions. It must be that she came from some world with which I am more familiar, whose mystery that crowd sensed without understanding it. . . . But why did she ask for my money?"

Talking this way, he walked rapidly along the beach to the point where the waves washed up their last ringlets. The sea seemed broader and more expansive to him. It was flecked with many-colored boats, scudding along under full sail. The vagabond's lungs swelled like the sails as he gazed at the expanse before him.

"I've thrown over my ballast," he exclaimed, laughing. "It isn't good for a man of my kind to lug the burden of riches around with him. That gold never got me anything but regrets. If I'd been poor, the woman at the inn, at Ruta, would have taken me to bed with her, the shopkeepers wouldn't have looked at me as if I were a murderer, and I should have enjoyed the sweetness of charity."

A wave folded over on the sand and cast up a necklace of shells at his feet.

"Daughters of Neptune," he said, picking up this marine gem, "I recognize your friendship. Wisely have you restored me to poverty where one knows the joys of labor, while reminding me that the rest is folly. I don't want to be a man of means any more. It's a stupid way to spend what days the gods have granted us. I thank Livia, she, of your sisterhood, who rose from the paternal fountain to give me this precious counsel."

He remained, standing in the water, facing the waves which jostled one another joyously. The ripples sang. In the sunlight, the sea was covered with strands of fair hair.

All that day, Baccio followed the coast to the pine woods of Viareggio where night advanced among the trunks of the lofty trees. Some fishermen made him share their supper with them, refusing the piece of silver he offered them. Then he lay down in the woods, on a couch of soft scented needles. He was so tired with having walked so far, and had so many stirring adventures, that he fell asleep at once, surrounded by a

throng of those nymphs who keep watch under the bark of pines.

At dawn, a ray of sunlight glided between the tree-trunks and awakened Baccio in the midst of those dear presences. The bright sky made the velvety boughs still more sumptuous. The branches shed a peaceful silence, for all the birds in Italy went with Francis of Assisi to Paradise.

Before taking the road to Pisa, the vagabond said farewell to the sea. He left it, not without some sadness, for he knew that it is our great mother. That day it seemed more beautiful to him than ever. It rolled in listlessly on the sands, and when he was at some distance, he could still hear it a long time, singing behind him. Then it was the murmur of the wind in the olives.

The farther he traveled along the road, the more Baccio felt a prey to some uncertain woe whose causes he could not determine, but which, little by little, took possession of him until it forced him to stop short in his path.

Suddenly, he understood its nature and made an effort to laugh as he resumed his march. Several moments later, he stopped again, his face lined with anxiety. His carefreeness had disap-

peared. He asked himself how he was going to live from now on and go through with his Index. Would worry over his daily bread leave him the time or the energy necessary to accomplish so vast a work? One cannot live on the dust of archives. The wearing labor of writing, the battle between word and thought, demanded a consistent, well-nourished strength, and security for the future. A strange destiny had jumbled in him all the contradictions of a nature at once studious and lunatic, nomadic and diligent, leaving out of account love, that vague or impassioned desire which he felt for all women, provided they were young and beautiful. Nothing in his nature constrained him to work: he was born for a life of pleasure and adventure, like Casanova's, for example; frequenting the post and gaming houses, and ending always in a marquise's bed, or her maid's.

Yet there was the joy of perpetuating ideas in words, of making of that fugitive thing, thought, a metallic parabola. The joy of awakening from the thrice-dead past some great figure, and accompanying him in his actions and ambitions until one comes to feel that delicious friendship

we find in creatures of our own contriving. The joy of breaking through the confines of our poor life and continuing ourselves in a book. Baccio understood all that, but he could no longer see very clearly into himself, nor into the morrow which was so close upon him; and he thought with a growing bitterness that he would have to abandon his book in order to live, or die of hunger writing it.

He counted his money again. The same twelve lire silver and several pence. When he had lunched and dined he would have two crowns left. One does not live long on two crowns . . .

"Ah!" cried Baccio, "how crushing is the fate of men of letters! How can one work in peace in the midst of daily worries? Almost all the men whose books we admire had incomes or pensions!"

The same moment, his face cleared. That sentence, uttered in a loud voice, had revealed to him the course he must pursue.

In all periods of history, princes and churchmen had assisted writers and endowed them from their wealth. It is true that there were no longer any princes, or none worthy the name, at least,

but there were still churchmen. And it was no other than His Eminence, the Archbishop of Pisa, who, the milk-carrier of Sarzana had told him, was so charitable. He would address himself to him, as so many needy poets had done to other prelates.

He recalled that Ascanio Centorio, when crushed by the direst poverty, had presented the Bishop of Modena, at a solemn ceremony, with a petition in verse, written on parchment. The Bishop had made him secretary of his benefice, and provided him with a pension. It is to this generous act of the prelate that we owe the admirable "Discourse on the Commission of Captain in the Army," printed in Venice, in 1558.

He, Baccio, would set about things in a similar manner. With the money he had left when he reached Pisa, he would buy a scroll of parchment, some odds and ends of ribbon and wax, and would make a handsome petition, beseeching the Archbishop to come to his aid so that his book could be brought to completion.

This idea thoroughly consoled him, and he resumed his journey, composing the sentences of his petition. He cast them in a pompous style

such as befits a prince of the Church, accustomed to the periods of apostolic eloquence. All day long, while tramping along the roads or at the inn table, and up to the very banks of the Arno, he fashioned and refashioned, polished and repolished the wording of his petition. By the time he reached the gates of Pisa he knew it from end to end by heart, and had nothing more to do but write it on the parchment.

He entered the city by the Porta Nuova just as evening was falling. Above the Piazza del Duomo, the heavenly fields were growing gray in the twilight. One angelic light hung poised on the crown of the Baptistery, on the highest arcades of the Church and Tower. The marbles put forth their flowers in the heart of silence. Nearer earth, between the shadowy masses of architecture, thousands of glow-worms seemed like a wavering world of stars.

CHAPTER IV

Tradition

"WE do not sell parchment, sir."

This was the tenth time he had entered a stationer's and received that reply. Moreover, most of the shopkeepers had never heard of such a commodity. They made a little dry sound with their tongues against the top of their mouths, to signify their powerlessness to provide so strange a substance, and their regret at being unable to satisfy a customer. One of them, more enlightened, inquired what Baccio wanted to do with it.

"It is for copying a poem . . ."

"Perhaps," the merchant suggested, "a sheet of thick paper would answer your requirements. I have some excellent English papers . . ."

He started to open his boxes.

Baccio stopped him. "No, I beg you. Excuse me . . . But I must have parchment."

He fled.

Oh, these little tradesmen, these shopkeepers without grace or culture! When had a petition ever been written on paper? Let them use that vile substance for printing books with a view to better propagating the thoughts (occasionally) of some man—he would gladly let them. But the prayer of a learned scholar to a Catholic dignitary, and the noble calligraphy employed in an address of that sort, demanded a beautiful surface, a substance of the finest quality, so that the petition might preserve all of its elegance, and not become the mere supplication of a pauper, writing to his parish priest.

He continued to search throughout the city for his scroll of parchment, until, near the Piazza dei Cavalieri, he discovered a bookbinder who had several. They were stiff and did not unroll readily, but the grain was firm and smooth, quite suitable for the curlicues, fine strokes and flourishes of decorative writing. Besides, the ribbon and the wax seals would keep the scroll in shape.

They debated at length the price of a piece of parchment, and agreed on five lire. Baccio carried it off unfolded, and bought ink, a black silk ribbon, and a stick of red sealing wax. Then

he set off to write his petition in the University library, which is vast, pompous and always empty.

May Your Most Serene Eminence, Monsignor, deign to cast your eye upon a disciple of the Muses, a doctor of history of the Roman Sapienza, whom chance has cast at your feet, and whom you may be so good as to consider. . . .

Through the open windows, the red roofs of the town could be seen. A blackbird whistled four notes, always the same. Perfumes blew in in gusts. Every quarter hour, the bells of the neighboring churches tolled forth their peaceful sound.

. . . it is not that I am unaware of the great infirmity of my judgment, or that I do not know how far removed I am from the perfection I am striving to attain, but . . .

Tomorrow, Sunday, the procession would leave the Cathedral, after the mass, to conduct the Archbishop to the Baptistery, where he was to give the apostolic benediction. Like Ascanio Centorio, Baccio would wait for him as he was passing, and, kneeling on the ground, his head humbly uncovered, would present to him the roll

of parchment. The prelate would halt with an indulgent smile, would confide the petition to one of his attendants, while waiting to learn if the duties of his ministry permitted him to take cognizance of it. Then he would bless the suppliant, and the procession would resume its march between the marble edifices.

. . . that I may be permitted to inscribe your Eminence's name on the title page of my book, so that, under such auspices, I may find among the learned public to whom the work is addressed . . .

He saw himself at the door of the sacristy, awaiting His Eminence's good will. Then he was summoned and received with that familiar grandeur which prelates of good family have always displayed in their relations with men of letters. Of what was said next, Baccio imagined several versions. It might be that the Archbishop would entrust him with the office of secretary to his person. It might be that he would grant him a monthly stipend. It might be that he would bestow on him a considerable sum, five, six, or seven hundred lire, perhaps a thousand at one sweep. It was high time! The roll of parchment,

and accessories, had devoured three-fourths of his fortune. At the end of the day, he would not have even a cent left. Living in the towns was dear, and one spent as high as two lire for a meal!

. . . that from the pinnacle of grandeur on which God and your signal merits have placed you, you may be so good as to consider him who has the honor of being, Monsignor, with all the respect I owe Your Eminence,

Your very humble and very obedient servant,

BACCIO CARDI.

He considered his work with complacency. The script was firm and well spaced; the China ink made the initial letters stand out in bold relief: their light and heavy strokes shone with the luster of ebony. Embellished with the richness of its materials, the petition seemed to have taken on a significance independent of its object, and to have become a sort of charter or votive inscription.

When it was dry, he rolled it up, the stiffness of the parchment making it as thick as his arm. After tying a knot of ribbons at both ends of the cylinder, he left the Library and looked for a wine-shop where he could withdraw to affix

the wax seals, for, as long as one could remember, that was how petitions had always been prepared. When he had found a lonely wine-cellar, he ordered a newspaper, which he spread carefully on the table, and a candle with which to melt the wax.

The host, who had seated himself before the table, watched him set about this singular business. It was a parcel he had been ordered to send, Baccio said.

"That won't be very secure," opined the wine dealer, "you ought to tie a string around it. . . ."

Baccio found himself in a predicament, however, for he had no seal, and one can't seal a petition decently with one's thumb. He opened his heart to the wine dealer who bustled about to find something. In succession, they tried the handle of a spoon, a carafe stopper and a pants' button, but none of these had the form or the appearance of a seal. Finally they used a French sou, so that one end of the petition bore the effigy of Napoleon III, and the other, an imperial eagle.

Then they sat down to drink, for their labors had left them extraordinarily thirsty.

Ten o'clock the next morning. The Piazza del Duomo, with its marble walks, running between the edifices on the great enclosure, strewn with daisies. The Piazza is nearly empty. One hears organs, pealing in the Cathedral; the boyish voices of the choir, singing an Agnus Dei. Several tourists, their noses in the air, stroll up, with Baedekers and kodaks. A guide, in a cloth cap, loads them down with precious details which they accept without interest. Near the white wall of the Campo Santo, a group of Royal Guards have piled their arms and are stretched out on the grass, while their officer, in leather gloves, nonchalantly smokes a cigarette.

For two hours, Baccio has been walking to and fro in front of the Church. He is fresh shaven. He has scrubbed his straw hat with soap and patiently blacked his shoes. Under his vest, he conceals the parchment, which from time to time he presses tenderly to his heart.

The service is interminable! Will they never get finished with the gradual, or sending up a stream of amens on one note! He has stopped more than twenty times before those bronze doors, recalling, one by one, all the biblical scenes

they represent. He returns to the marble columns. They are translucent and amber-hued, like women's necks. He could caress that sensual architecture with pleasure, were his heart not contracted with impatience, his throat parched, his hands paralyzed. But the service goes on! When Baccio lifts the quilted curtain, he sees the Archbishop, at the very end of the nave, slowly officiating in the midst of a conclave of canons, beneath the gilded ceiling.

Hearing the communion bell, he withdraws a little from the Church as far as that spot on the marble walk which he has chosen for presenting his petition to the prelate. The roll makes a lump under his vest, which he opens slightly for a moment: the parchment is not frayed, ribbons and waxen seals are intact. He hugs it to his breast again, and, with the blood throbbing in his temples, turns toward the Cathedral, awaiting the emergence of the Bishop.

At the same moment, a music of bells breaks forth in the Campanile. The Royal Guards unpile their arms. The curtains of the Church go up like curtains in a theater: an odor of incense, of lilies and syringa, pervades the enclosure.

The faithful invade the Piazza and gather again on both sides of the marble avenue which connects the Duomo with the Baptistery. All the girls have organdie dresses which blow about their legs. The perfume of their bodies supplants the flowers and incense in Baccio's nostrils. But he is hardly capable of enjoying such things, so great is his agitation. He sees flames and gold, stirring confusedly in the depths of the nave. He hears the voices of the chanters, approaching. When the crowd begins to jostle him, he protects the scroll under his vest, with both hands.

The cross-bearer emerges from the shadows. Carabinieri surround him: skirted coats, shovel hats, blue and red plumes. Behind them march the penitents of the Madonna, old proletarians, in white albs and blue bands, their cloaks hanging over their backs, a silver plate in the middle of their chests, their robes turned up above black cloth trousers. One of them, a very tall man, with a head as pointed and hairless as an egg, carries the blue taffeta banner with its ostrich plumes.

Other orders follow. The Carmelites, wearing the brown cloak and scapulary on their shoul-

ders. The order of St. Cecilia, dressed in a green so transparent that it seems to float between them and the eye. The order of St. Michael the Archangel whose cape and banner are scarlet. The penitents carry tapers three feet high, and march gravely, brandishing them before them like canes.

Next come the children orphaned by the sea, marching two by two in parallel lines. Dressed in sailor suits, each carries a bouquet of roses covered with a white veil. Then the student chanters, as crimson as their gowns, from shouting in Latin. Then the society "For Italy," with the national flag; their surtouts flapping about their legs, and an enamel Heart of Jesus in their lapels.

Baccio elbows his way to the front of the crowd, and watches the procession defile. It seems to him as if the entire city had gathered in the Cathedral, and that all its citizens are passing before him in succession. The others have already disappeared under the dome of the Baptistery, and still no sign of the Archbishop!

A double row of canons, in white miters, slowly descends the slope of the enclosure. This chapter is endless! Behind them come the acces-

sories of their cult,—a conical parasol with yellow and amaranthine bands, a fan of plumes such as one sees only in pictures of the processions of the Pharaohs, and much else besides.

Then an order is shouted. The Royal Guards near the the portal present arms. At last—the Archbishop is coming!

The Archbishop is a big, fat man, with the face of a Roman proconsul,—a Mæcenæ face, thinks Baccio, who is studying him passionately, like a gambler who has staked his entire fortune on a single throw. The prelate pauses on the topmost step to look down upon the crowd, bowing before him. Then he strikes the pavement with his crozier and resumes his pompous march under the silken dais, which swells and ripples in the breeze.

Baccio's heart throbs so loudly in his breast that he can no longer hear anything, is aware of nothing but that interior tumult. For in another moment, this Pisan throng, gathered upon this august enclosure, will behold a traditional episode,—a Prince of the Church receiving a poet's petition. . . .

Suddenly everything is transformed! The

young men have tight-fitting hose, satin vests and long hair curling about their cheeks. The air is rent with the sound of trumpets blown by knights in armor. Banners are unfurled. The pigeons take flight. The crowd cries, "Vivat! Monsignor! Vivat! Vivat!" Lackeys, in lace-trimmed tunics, hold white stag-hounds on leathern leashes. Others have falcons on their gauntleted wrists. All the nobility of Pisa, on fiery steeds, adorned with plumed crests and many-colored trappings, accompany the Archbishop.

They are about to pass the suppliant. They have almost reached him!

Baccio extricates his roll of parchment and darts toward the Archbishop . . .

A terrified gesture! The dais clatters to the pavement! Pandemonium! A hundred hands lay hold of Baccio. He is hurled this way and that under their blows. He cries out, writhes, until he is stunned, and has only a vague sense of being carried somewhere out of the uproar. A single shout keeps droning in his ear: "Kill the anarchist! Kill him! Kill him!"

CHAPTER V

Salvatore Palumbo

DARKNESS.

Not a ray of daylight pierced this dungeon. The walls must be very close together, and the ceiling so low that he was tempted to bend his head on standing. From time to time a sudden sound of water falling, now near at hand, now farther off. At times, two of these sudden torrents would begin almost at the same moment. Then there would be long silences, followed by two or three cataracts in succession. These liquid tumults, with their unequal pauses, in the midst of the darkness, obsessed one to the point where the mind, in spite of itself, followed their irregular rhythm. And Baccio, remembering his disappointment, and striving to understand what had happened, awaited the recurrence of the gushing waters in the silence, and pondered his mischance to their sound, as a loiterer gives rein

to his dreams, to the sound of torrents which plunge into some valley.

They had taken him before a police lieutenant. He had received so many blows in the uproar that he no longer felt the buffets of his guards. He no longer had a hat or tie, and his parchment scroll had been lost in the crowd.

"Ho! Ho! My fine fellow," the officer said to him. "We've got you after all. You were very rude to us at Massa. But in Pisa the police know better, you see. . . . Well, so you specialize in processions. And why do you do that, my anarchist friend? Go ahead, talk!"

"I," stammered Baccio, "I wanted to give . . ."

"Keep quiet! We know perfectly well who you are. We've had you under surveillance for three days. We know that you gave several thousand lire in gold to the anarchists at Carrara. . . . Where did that money come from? We'll see! Answer!"

"I didn't give . . ."

"Who told you to say anything! You were seen since early this morning, wandering back and forth in front of the Cathedral, hiding your

bomb under your clothes. Is that true? Yes or no! Were you seen or not? Tell us, and see . . ."

"It wasn't a . . ."

"I told you to keep quiet! It was you sent a threatening letter to the Archbishop! Not so clever, my fine fellow! When you're planning dirty work, you oughtn't to warn your victims. Fortunately, the police have sharp eyes. You spent all yesterday preparing the bomb. The proprietor of the Sun wine-shop told us everything. We know what package you had to send. Ah! Ah! Were you in the Sun wine-shop, huh? We'll find out! Were you there? Answer, damn you!"

"I . . ."

"That's all right! We're not going to ask you anything. We know all we need to know. For the present, we're going to put you in the jug, my anarchist friend! Take off his suspenders and put him in his cell."

While they led him, rather ungently, away, Baccio, clutching his pants, which fell about his thighs, heard the officer say to his men, "And take that bomb to the laboratory immediately."

"An anarchist," thought Baccio, immobile in the darkness. "An anarchist! I, an anarchist!"

Of course he knew that this neo-Greek term designated the members of a group perpetually in revolt against bourgeois society. But, he himself had never revolted against anything, unless, at times, against the wickedness of men, and, more often, against the coldness of women. Had he ever troubled himself about the social questions which agitate people nowadays? They were all part of that transitory present which is of interest to politicians only. The present has no part in the perspective of history.

So thought Baccio, to the irregular sound of the water gushing in the darkness. During the intervals of quiet he vaguely sensed a presence at his side: a breath, a quiver, less than that, that intangible fluidity which emanates from a living creature. After several minutes, this impression became a sort of uneasiness which made him get up and walk across the little cell until he encountered a wall.

Groping about, he discovered a man, lying on a bench, and seemingly sound asleep, for he did not wake, even at Baccio's touch.

"Fortunate are they who can sleep in a prison," exclaimed Baccio, in a fantastic tone.

He seated himself near his companion, his eyes wide open, his head in his hands, musing on the irony of his fate, which immured him, a vagabond, ever in search of adventure and new lands, which immured him in a dungeon—for how long? How many days or months? For the rest of his life, perhaps. . . .

This thought filled him with such sudden and violent anguish that he hurled himself upon the sleeper and began to shake him, crying, "Help! Help!"

"Heh! What the . . . What's the matter?" said the man, suddenly sitting up.

"Nothing, nothing. Pardon me," Baccio answered, without letting go his hold of him.

They felt one another softly in an effort to find out what each was like.

"These damned buggers," the man exclaimed with an oath, "economize on the electricity, too."

"Isn't there ever light?" asked Baccio, for the purpose of saying something.

"What! Light! The rules, my dear sir, require them to give us light. There should be light in all

these dark dungeon cells. At Rome and at Modena, there's a lamp in every cell. In Genoa, all the cells are lit by a single ceiling lamp. But it gives a very satisfactory light. In Milan, they only light up at night: the cells all have windows. I hear that in Bologna the cells have two lamps each. But I've never been there: a comrade told me."

"You've traveled about a lot," said Baccio, not wishing to say: "You've been in jail a lot."

The noise of the falling water drowned the reply.

"I beg your pardon," said Baccio when silence had resumed. "I didn't hear you."

"That's the latrines," growled the man in the deep darkness. "The rules require them to have a latrine in every cell and for the cistern to flush automatically every five minutes. But they laugh at rules in this buggerly place. In Venice, and Naples, all the latrines flush at the same time. It's really admirable!"

"I see," Baccio began again, "that you've traveled a lot."

"A little," said the man modestly. "I am a peddler by trade. And you?"

"I? I'm a Doctor of History. My name is Baccio, Baccio Cardi, from Albano."

"Well, my name is Salvatore Palumbo, and I come from Positano, in the province of Salerno. But," he continued after a double cataract, "you're an educated man. What are you doing in jail?"

"I don't know. They took me for an anarchist. They thought I wanted to kill the Archbishop . . ."

Baccio told his whole story, since the contract with Mosca, and even a little prior to that, so that his companion should perceive quite clearly that he was no anarchist, but a poor, sentimental scholar, incapable of a crime, haunted by the mysterious, and weighed down by the burden of a tyrannical work, and that he went from town to town, along the roads and highways, for the purpose of satisfying, at one and the same time, his taste for vagabonding and the exigencies of his calling.

The longer the recital continued in the darkness, the more and more fraternal became Salvatore's sympathy, and even deference, shown in his interruptions, for this man, talking to him

with such frankness, knew thousands of things that he, Palumbo, would never know. And though he knew nothing of Baccio's person and had never seen his face, he pictured him exactly, according to the idea that simple men have of men of learning: tall, his forehead furrowed with wrinkles, his brows knitted, his glance distracted, his lips thin, his gaze directed always at the sun, as if to find in it the solution to an eternal problem.

As Baccio began again to speak of his lonely heart, Salvatore rejoined, "I, too, have tramped the roads." He spoke of that because the rest filled him with a respectful silence. "I, too, love women, and they are always gentle and obliging to me. Not that I seek them very eagerly, for I never have the time. I never do more than go to the houses where I meet them. I have to pass up those who sell their kisses for the small change of sentiment and words, for I can have traveled several leagues in the time it would take to seduce them. I'd be glad to play the lover if I had nothing else to do, but I never take root in any one place. Furthermore, I've observed that there's no worse way for getting, or not getting,

women. Once they've started on their game of sighs and goo-goo eyes, there's no way of getting them off it again. But when you act indifferent or play the gay blade, they come rubbing up against you, they're so wild to have you take notice of them. When you tie yourself down to one woman, you pass up the others. And women are like days: those which are past never come again. When I do take up with one of them, it's nearly always without thinking . . ."

He seemed inexhaustible on this subject. Baccio took good care not to interrupt him: he drank deep from this fount of wisdom. These views confirmed all the reproaches he had so many times leveled at himself to conquer the hesitancies of his tender lover's nature; in future he promised himself to treat women cavalierly.

"Once you let them know that you've tumbled," Salvatore continued, "nothing delights them more than to make you lovesick, for they're bad actors by nature. Their enjoyment is not the same as ours. It isn't as strong, so they want it to last longer. But just let some gallant come along who's more handsome and daring and doesn't let on that he thinks they're attractive,—

and they drop their reserve and their villainies for fear that they'll lose their chance . . .”

While he was talking thus in the darkness, formulating such decisive axioms on the frailty of women, Baccio was trying to picture to himself the manner of man who was sitting before him, yet of whom he could see nothing. Everything he had just said showed an experience in love which was the possession, Baccio thought, only of those fortunate beings to whom the gods have granted the art of pleading, nobility of countenance, elegance of bearing, gentleness of expression, gestures full of amorous compulsion, and that something, at once vigorous and coaxing, which women find especially seductive. No doubt, some brilliant and romantic adventure had cast him into this dungeon—some outraged husband in pursuit, some father's vengeance. He interrogated his companion.

“No, professor,” Salvatore replied gravely, “women don't get you into such common prisons. I thought I told you, I am a peddler by trade, and they arrest me every so often because I haven't a license—or for other reasons . . . But usually I get out after a few hours in jail.”

"But you weren't always a peddler?" Baccio asked to hide his disillusion.

"I'm a peddler when I have a chance to be, that is to say when business allows. But I work a little at all the trades known to man, and I'm acquainted with a few that aren't. I go to all the local festivals whose dates I can tell you by heart better than the Pope can tell you the saints in his Church. You can always sell little things there. They are different in every village, according as the inhabitants are pious or the girls are coquettes. To the old bigots I sell chaplets from Jerusalem, made in Germany. To the young girls, gilt bracelets, ribbons and garters. During the times when people's money never sees the light of day, but is stored away, along with the wine and oil, I call to mind a hundred and twenty-two little trades which don't make much of a show, so that nobody ever thinks of them, but which feed an honest man, accustomed to eating his fill and drinking more than he needs to."

With tireless enthusiasm he enumerated all the creations of his industry. Charlatan, sorcerer, fortune-teller, bone-setter, card-sharp, procurer,

dealer in the future and elixirs: neither sincerity nor morals encumbered his arts. But, knowing the customs of all parts, the dialect of every province, he inspired confidence in everyone by talking his own language in his own way.

Boot-black in muddy weather, vender of umbrellas and fans on days when the sun shone, he yielded to the caprices of weather. In summer, he sold slices of watermelon on the streets and cups of snow colored with syrups. In winter, he played the guitar to ravish the ears of customers in hair-dressing parlors. He knew how to play the accordion, could blow on an ocarina, and make couples dance to the sound of a trumpet. He knew thousands of card and juggling tricks and amusing little physical stunts which he exhibited in the evenings, in taverns. He had no equal for stopping at café tables, and, with all the gravity of a born deaf mute, waiting silently for someone to give him alms. He was a wonder at playing the blind man, the one-armed cripple, the lame man, the hunchback, the man with fever, the nervous wreck, the epileptic and even a man who has been run over, in which event he would throw himself against the wheels of a

carriage without being in the least hurt. He always had little dogs to sell to young ladies on honeymoon trips, and guided foreigners around the cities, imparting to them historical details known to no one else, for he invented them as needed. He had three infallible tricks for collecting a crowd of loiterers and hence was much sought after by candidates to lead election campaigns, which no one was better fitted to do, for he had powerful lungs, an accommodating conscience, and a throat that was perpetually dry. He carried a whole line of charms, amulets, spells, nostrums and fetiches for making young girls miscarry, or winning the lottery. You would see him carrying the banner or the cross, or swinging the censer, in processions, in those thrice-damned districts where the priest could not find enough of the faithful. And, above all, he was the best man in Italy for ringing the bells on days of solemn festival.

"I don't mean to be boastful, professor, but I have a way of holding the clapper and making it tremble against the shell of a bell, while I swing or hold back the big bell, in time to it, with my other hand. It makes a little song, as gay as any-

thing, in which the big bell's voice chimes in. And when I ring the bells in a village where I've been before, people raise their eyes and say to each other, 'Listen, that's Salvatore ringing!' Of course, to tell the truth, they saw me that morning in the wine-shops."

Then he told of his travels through the provinces and what he offered to his customers, with a perfect knowledge of their needs and the products of the country. In Venice he sold paper cut-outs in the shape of a gondola prow. In Ravenna, busts of Dante. In Florence, flag-root for perfuming linen. In the Campagna, silk kerchiefs for the head, to which the women there are very partial. In Rome, relics and flannel hearts blessed by the Holy Father. In Naples, little antique bronzes, cast at Wschrau, in Bohemia, which he offered in a low voice, while hiding them under his coat, for the sale of antiquities is controlled by the state. Almost everywhere, he suggested certain postal cards to foreigners; and to single gentlemen, a printed list, containing the addresses of "tea-houses."

Too, he went on all those pilgrimages on which the Italian masses are in flux from January to

December, from north to south and east to west. To the Monte Sacro of Varese. To Our Lady of Figogna. To Our Ladies of Misteto, of Pompeii, of the Cività, of Montenero. To the Sanctuaries of St. Anthony, at Padua, and of St. Andrew, at Amalfi. He sold great quantities of medals, chaplets, necklaces of hazel-nuts, pious images, tapers, scapulas, and, for the less spiritual needs, salami and cheeses.

The gushing of the latrines punctuated this odyssey, which, issuing from the night, assumed a kind of droll grandeur. Baccio listened with an almost childish curiosity, alternately laughing or feeling moved to tears. This man was everything he himself had dreamed of being. For Baccio had resigned himself to his destiny as a scrivener only for lack of ability to blossom forth to joyous knavery as a thoroughly bad egg, a seducer of young girls, a notorious drunkard. But there was too much tenderness in his poor heart for that, too many dreams in his head. To Salvatore, on the contrary, life was a fair-grounds, many-colored and moving, where one turned human passions and postures to profit. He roamed about it at his leisure, with the easy grace of a man who

is made much of by women because he does not respect them. . . .

There was a noise on the stairs which led down to the cells, and the light of an electric bulb suddenly dispelled the darkness. They were blinded for a moment; then they raised their heads and examined each other in amazement.

Neither of them saw the person he had imagined.

Baccio had a childish face, with big bright eyes and full lips, laden with sweetness and kisses.

Salvatore Palumbo was a squat little man, with immense feet, bow legs, a short trunk, embellished with muscular shoulders, the arms of a monkey hanging to his knees, and an enormous head, set, with nothing between, on his shoulders. A two weeks' beard bristled all over his face, for his whiskers grew right up to his eyes. But his head, which was as round as a sphere, was shorn to the scalp. His mouth widened delicately and, when he spoke or laughed, opened like the jaws of an ogre who is in the habit of eating little children whole and guzzling jugs of unfermented wine to wash the brats down. His eyes gleamed, flashed, sparkled, glittered with

malice from under his shaggy, bushy brows. There was at once so much spirit and so much kindliness in those eyes that Baccio soon recovered from his astonishment.

But if the two men did not recognize one another, they understood each other better. Salvatore perceived what weakness and melancholy was in this handsome youth who was harassed by the phantoms of his imagination. And Baccio divined what a wealth of warm devotion Palumbo concealed beneath his derisive exterior and his affectation of cynicism. And, drawn to each other by a sudden emotion which neither sought to control, they embraced for a long time.

They had just separated and were staring at each other, smiling, when the door opened. A carabinieri appeared.

"Salvatore Palumbo!" he shouted with a voice like that of the archangel in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

"He's here in person," said Salvatore, picking up his felt hat which had fallen under the bench.

"It's not necessary to present yourself," the soldier sneered. "You're known to the house! Go on! Get out! And next time . . ."

"*E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle,*" recited Baccio, who knew plenty more Dante.

Palumbo saluted the carabinieri with comical respect, and walked out of the cell without paying any more attention to Baccio than if he had never spoken to him. The door closed on the prisoner, and darkness engulfed him again.

Then an indescribable bitterness invaded Baccio's soul. What if fate had toyed with him hundreds of times when he proffered his tender sentiments to women—he was willing to bear it and always managed more or less to console himself. But when a man aroused in him sentiments of the warmest affection, and played a comedy of friendship with him, only to forsake him the moment after—that exceeded all limits of malignity and disillusioned forevermore his over-sensitive heart. Stronger in him than desire or love was his dream of friendship. For years he had been waiting for the man (one particular man and no other, he was sure) whose temperament could respond to his, and who would become the sharer of his thoughts. At last he had met him in his wanderings. He had felt his soul and Palumbo's blend inseparably. That delicious com-

munion had thrown them into one another's arms, like beloved brothers who have found each other again. For an instant he believed that his old dream had become reality and that he was going to be one of twain, he, Baccio, who had always been alone. But the departure of this man without a glance, without so much as a good-bye, cast him into a solitude of soul all the more frightful for his having dreamed to have escaped it.

"Baccio Cardi!"

He was plunged so deep in melancholy that he had not noticed the light come on again or the door open. The carabinieri hailed him in his extraordinary voice.

"Come on! Get upstairs! You're wanted up there!" he said, pushing Baccio before him.

In the lieutenant's office there was no one but a sergeant of the guard and a priest in a violet-colored cloak.

"Here are your suspenders," said the sergeant. "Sign this official record."

Baccio signed without reading the sheet of paper they handed him.

"You are free!" growled the under-officer.

"Monsignor will dispense with your thanks, but it's to him that you owe this. And take care that you don't disturb any more processions . . ."

"I won't disturb them," murmured Baccio, fastening up his pants.

"His Eminence," the priest interposed, "read your petition, which the explosives laboratory forwarded to him. He is sensible of the confidence you place in him, and charged me to give you this, with his blessing."

He handed Baccio a long envelope, secured with wax, on which, even at a distance, the archiepiscopal seal could be seen. Baccio bowed to the priest, to the blessing, to the envelope, and received both with so great emotion that he could not stammer as much as a thank you. Then he went out, bowing to everything he encountered on the way. At last he found himself on the streets of Pisa, hatless, tieless, his clothes torn, his heart in mourning for the friendships of this world, but overwhelmed with His Eminence's bounty, and tranquil for the future.

He kept the letter in his hand,—clutched tightly between his fingers, not daring to open it in that ill-starred quarter. He felt of it from

time to time to speculate on the amount of its contents. It was fat and had that elasticity peculiar to bank notes when bundled—at least so thought Baccio. All that he had been thinking before was swept away, and far away, by the prelate's munificence!

A new era was about to open. The hour for work had struck. An end to vagabonding and adventure-seeking on the highroads! He would finish his Index to the last word, going from city to city only to procure documents. He would throw all his natural enthusiasm into creating his book. He would acknowledge the peaceful friendship of books, since the delectable friendship of men was denied him.

His throat tightened as that thought flooded back on him. "Ah, Salvatore," he said, "my one friend! Why have you forsaken me? Did you not comprehend the wealth of tenderness I have for you? Don't you know that we were made for one another, like those true friends of bygone days whom Plutarch and Lucian have immortalized? To think that you are not here now, to share my joy and my riches! Salvatore, ungrateful friend, how I would have loved you, had you

not forsaken me without once turning your head!"

Thinking such thoughts, discoursing to himself of his grief and his great good fortune, he reached the quays along the Arno, which were deserted in the glaring sunlight. He chose the most solitary spot, and, facing the river, after making sure that no one was coming, broke the Archbishop's seal.

Between two sheets of vellum, folded in four, lay a ten lire note.

CHAPTER VI

The Ethics of Salvatore

HE picked up the bill between his thumb and index finger, held his arm over the river, and was about to open his fingers when a hand closed on his.

"Salvatore!"

"Himself! And richer by ten lire since you're throwing your money in the river!"

"Salvatore, why . . ."

"I followed you, my son. I hid for an hour in a urinal opposite the jail. I heard the priest in lavender, and I felt sure they were going to let you go. When I saw you come out, I followed you at a distance, for it wouldn't do for them to see us together."

"Why," Baccio began again, "why did you leave me without saying good-bye?"

They called one another by their first names, without even noticing it, for such was the desire of both their hearts.

"Because I know the police from having had plenty to do with them," Salvatore replied. "They're not much afraid of people who are all alone, but they *are* afraid of people together. To these gentlemen, one is one, but two is eight. They don't understand even yet that a single man is very much more dangerous than a group, and that the man who writes in his room is more to be feared than the roisterers who demonstrate in the streets. And so, my son, if they had seen that we're friends, you and I would still be in jail."

You and I! You and I! Baccio relished the sweetness of that conjunction, even more than he admired the wisdom of his companion. He repeated the delicious syllables half aloud. Keeping step together, they walked the length of the quay, which the sun had emptied of people, their arms about one another's shoulders.

The city lay white and hot. Gracefully it followed the curve of the river, the gates in its walls seeming to open in the midst of the sky itself.

A sense of bliss flowed from everything. Baccio felt it penetrate him, making his thoughts at once more robust and cheerful. He told his friend

the story of the letter, but now he experienced hardly any disappointment. And, as his tale unfolded, he felt foreign to the whole adventure. Palumbo listened without saying a word, merely rubbing the end of his nose at times with the tips of his fingers, as he always did when he had some difficulty to resolve.

"If you haven't a cent, my son," he said at last, "I guess you'll have to come with me. This country isn't worth a damn to us. There are too many parsimonious bishops, and too many indiscreet lads. But I've got some business in Lucca which we can reach tonight in the wagon of a friend of mine. It's an excellent wagon, roomier and more comfortable than a sleigh. You could put ten men as big as you in it, and let them lie full length, for it can carry eight hundredweight of hay at one trip. You can sprawl in the hay and meditate at leisure, for I think that your noble families will make plenty good company for you. Are there as many libraries in Lucca as in Pisa?"

"There's the Felician, the Archiepiscopal and the Governative," Baccio replied, feeling himself

overtaken again by his taste for roving. "I've been there before."

"Very well, you leave things to me. You come with us and work at the *Felician*, or the *Archiepiscopal*, or any other one, just as long as you like, while I'm looking after my own little affairs."

"I can work there just as well as here," sighed Baccio, "but I haven't got a thing in the world save you, my friend. What can I do to live?"

"You'll live as you ought to," Salvatore said, shaking his enormous head. "You have a great work to do! That's enough for one man! The things of the spirit are yours. You are in your own sphere with them, and I am your humble servant. To know how you are going to eat, how you are going to drink, what kind of a room you're going to sleep in,—such things are not worthy of your consideration. As for me, I haven't lived for anything else for more than forty years. I've studied men from that single standpoint. I know just what has to be done to draw wine from their cellars, bread from their pantries, and money from their purses. You can take a book from a bookcase and read a page in less than an hour. You know how to set your

thoughts down on paper with extraordinary words. That's your function, because you are educated and a genius. As for me, I know how to breed small coins so they'll have good-looking children. I know how to take the pot off the hook at the right moment. So let me do my part, my son, and you go on meditating on princes and marquises and their wives and grandchildren."

"That's very nice," Baccio murmured, without a trace of irony, "but I wouldn't feel right, living at your expense."

"Men of your sort," said Salvatore, "aren't supposed to live like others. If you were a mason, or a weaver, or a locksmith, I'd say to you: 'Take your trowel and get back to your trade or your forge!' Anybody at all can do what they do and be sure of earning their bread and wine. But for writing a book, heaps of things are required that the others haven't got, and you can't even find food to eat. There's no place for you in life nowadays. I know men very well, and I know what interests them: it's eating, women, ambitions, gambling. It isn't books. I've been told that all our country's great men, the ones the streets are

named after, or whose statues you see in the squares,—Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and the rest,—always lived at somebody else's expense. I believe it's true, for writing a book is no trade to feed a man. So, my son, I don't think you need worry if I am a father to you and look after your victuals."

Baccio's eyes filled with tears. He clasped his companion's arm tightly.

"You are kind," he said in a choking voice, "you are kind, Salvatore, my gentle friend."

They looked at one another a long time, and since Palumbo forced a smile to hide his emotion, the corners of his mouth seemed to meet his ears.

"That speech has made me terribly thirsty," he said, hurrying along. "Our wagon is waiting for us opposite Santo Torpe. There's an inn there where you can drink a better *carmignano* than the Pope or the King, either, ever tasted. But the owner doesn't give it to every wayfarer who knocks at his door . . ."

They entered the Borgo and soon found themselves in front of the church where their carter was waiting for them. He was a big man, with a

terra-cotta face. His name was Aniello Colonnese. His four-wheeled cart, painted a bright scarlet, carried a dome of hay four yards high, secured with ropes. The two horses had green cloth housings and cord head-gear, with red pompons and copper caps, that flashed brightly on their necks and shoulders. A whole apparatus of little bells hung from the main-shaft, and every time the animals twitched to chase off the flies, the bells jingled.

They were a long time drinking, in the cool bar of the wine-shop, for everybody insisted on the privilege of standing treat, the innkeeper with the rest. When it came Baccio's turn, Salvatore paid. Then they argued for a good quarter of an hour, at the wagon step, as to who was to have the middle place on the seat. When they finally got out of town, the sun had begun to sink.

To make up for lost time, the carter whipped up his horses with might and main. The team bounded on amidst a great din of bells. Salvatore and Colonnese, who came from the same parts, knew all the Neapolitan songs. They sang them at the top of their lungs, their voices blending,

while Baccio beat time with a stick. But as they were songs of love and kisses, he ended by surrendering himself entirely to those tender fancies, without taking further part in the concert.

The shadow of the cypresses lengthened across the fields of wheat. The fronts of the houses, the church towers, shone with an orange light, then, one by one, were extinguished. A long line of clouds lay, like a scarf, on the slopes of the Pisan Hills.

"A little here and a little there,
That's how you make love everywhere."

So sang the two cronies, beating time with their feet on the futchel, while the little bells and chimes mingled their merry din with the duo of the drunken men. Then Salvatore stopped singing, and while Colonnese took up the refrain, he imitated a guitar accompaniment with his mouth, plucking an imaginary instrument, in a really wonderful way.

So, singing in their deep barytones, and beating time, while the bells jingled to the sound of an imaginary lute, they entered San Giuliano as night fell. The carter was for going on, but Sal-

vatore persuaded him that it would be better to sleep and have a good meal at an inn he knew, where the girls of those parts gathered and where there was an excellent stable. This last argument convinced Colonnese, who loved nothing so much as his horses, and who would have foregone the women provided his team had litter and a measure of oats. Baccio, who was no teamster, agreed, dreaming of the girls.

There was only one in the inn room. She fell on Palumbo's neck, kissing him slowly on the mouth, and calling him, "My love!" He accepted her caresses while waving his monkey arms, like a man who is about to faint, and making weird noises in his throat, like a peacock in the mating season.

The girl was attractive without being beautiful. Baccio thought her wonderful. She had heavy hips, a long, strong neck, a small calf, neatly set off in white stockings, and withal, a passionate face, under a mop of bluish hair whose loose ends she kept constantly fastening in place with copper pins.

Leaving Salvatore, she went to sit beside Baccio, and pretended to yawn, stretching her arms

to make the tips of her breasts stand out under her bodice. He had only to cover them with his hand, while he clasped the woman to him and covered her neck with kisses. She would laugh as it tickled, would struggle a little, then let herself be cuddled as he wished. Baccio knew that, he knew exactly how to clasp her. You put your right arm behind her, your left hand covering her left breast,—suddenly, so that she would not have a chance to get up or pass it off. But, at the proximity of so immediate a joy, as he felt in advance the warm elasticity of her throat under his hand, the velvety softness of her neck against his lips, such anguish overcame him that his knees trembled and his tongue went dry.

He glanced at the woman from the corner of his eye and asked with a tremulous voice, "What is your name?"

At the same instant, he felt that there was nothing more to be done, and that all the joy of love had flown away.

Her name was Violetta, and she really was as dark and fragrant as that flower.

Again he said, just as he had to the woman in

the inn at Ruta, "It's a pretty name. It suits you well. . . ."

Every word he uttered made the gap between them a little wider. He realized it, but added, "What part of the country do you come from?"

"I'm from Pavia. You know, where they have the Charterhouse . . ."

"Yes, I know. It's very beautiful. . . ."

He made a final effort. "You are, too," he said, swallowing his tongue.

Then he said nothing more, did not make a single movement, vainly striving to recover his first audacity, or at least the idea it had given him. The girl was bewildered. The same uneasiness gripped them both, for they desired one another more than ever. She sensed that he could love as could no one else. But she was seized with an unconscious modesty. She pulled her skirt over her knees, buttoned her waist and withdrew from Baccio, who did not even see her get up, so deep was his despair.

Several minutes later, he raised his head and saw the girl on Palumbo's knees, her skirts in the breeze, her garters sparkling in the light, rolling her head on the peddler's shoulder and pur-

ring like a cat. Glancing at Baccio, she began to laugh, doubling up on her belly and her hips. He strove to understand why this woman, who was beautiful enough to choose him, should prefer that bald, lopsided monster, that knock-kneed ogre, that ape, that gorilla! For a moment he loathed his friend. Then he plunged still deeper into his despair.

When Colonnese returned, having looked after his horses, all three sat down at table. It was the men's hour, and the girl disappeared into the kitchen. Baccio did not drink: Salvatore was worried about it. He had seen the whole proceeding, but it did not occur to him that anyone could be upset for so small a cause. That a woman went or did not go to bed with him, seemed of far less importance to him than whether the wine was good or bad. Baccio's sufferings surprised, even more than they touched, him. But as he knew men, he questioned his friend discreetly.

"Is it Violetta who's making you so glum, my son?"

"Why should she?" said Baccio, who was still rancorous.

"I'd willingly hand her over to you," Palumbo continued without answering, "but she wants her own way, and with the exception of the birds who pay, she chooses her own lovers. You're a handsome fellow and ought to know how to wield a sword. Why did she go away from you?"

"How should I know?" groaned Baccio, with tears in his eyes. "Probably I don't know how to act . . ."

"That's possible, my son, for I've seen you at work, and without meaning to hurt you at all, I must say, you don't seem to me to have the knack."

He poured himself a big glass of wine, drank it at a single draught and, setting his glass on the table, said, "You're too serious with women."

Then he filled his glass again and continued.

"You are much too serious with women, my son. They want very much to be loved, but they want still more to be amused. I believe they even prefer men who amuse them to men who love them. In any group of men and women, it isn't the dreamer who delights them, it's the joker. In fact, it's much easier to get one of these little

girls by making her laugh than by showing her a solemn face. In fun, you can do a great many things with your hands that you wouldn't dare do in cold blood. When a woman begins to laugh, she begins to waver: then the job's half done. Passionate words, fiery declarations frighten women more than they please them, for they make the adventure serious, and women are afraid of getting in too deep. It's far better to lead them on without their realizing it, and the quicker the better, so that they don't have time to reflect. When the thing's done, you're free, my friend, to let loose your lyricism, for once they've given themselves, they want it to last forever. If you want them, you'll have to conform to their way of loving, and never forget that if we love more before, they love more afterwards. Don't seem to be too passionate, since it's your hard luck to be so, but hide your tender feelings with joking, and make them think you only want to play, though you're trembling with impatience."

Discoursing thus, he alternately emptied and refilled his glass, with the result that one whole flask was exhausted before his eloquence.

"My son, I am not handsome, believe me. I'm too old not to know that I carry on my shoulders a laughable pumpkin of a head, and that I could make trained dogs jump through my legs. Yet I've had nearly all the women I've wanted. It's true that I've never addressed my passions to princesses. But all the beautiful girls aren't necessarily in schools or palaces. I even believe that carrying water on your head and breathing deep in the sunshine gives girls a more graceful walk and firmer breasts. However that may be, I've never had to complain on account of women, at least since I was thirty. Before that I had to learn about love at my own expense. Well, my son, if love has been kind to me, it's because I'm a gay dog, a good fellow, a jolly companion, whose nutcracker mouth makes the ladies die laughing. They prefer my broad jokes and the faces I make to the melancholy gaze of a good-looking boy. I don't say that they're right, in fact, I think they're wrong. But they're so made that the Pope nor the Devil can't change them. And if you want to catch a few of them, my young friend, you'll have to show a face with a smile."

Without uttering a word, Baccio quenched his thirst at that fountain of wisdom.

"The Devil," Colonnese interrupted, banging the table with his fist, "the thing to do is to have a good wife and give her children!"

"You talk like the carter you are," Salvatore answered. "The gentleman here is a scholar and doesn't share the popular tastes. Your imagination never gets beyond your wife and your horses. He associates with the most illustrious families in Italy and is writing a book, the like of which you couldn't write if you had twenty heads and fifty pairs of hands!"

"That's true," said Colonnese, "for I don't know how to write at all. But I'm very well satisfied with my wife, for she knows how to cook, to wash my shirts and feed my children, for I *am* a carter, by God!"

They would never have been able to come to an agreement, if the waiter had not brought them a tray of flasks, cheese lasagne with sauce, a mixed fry, meat balls and a huge plate of those oyster-plants that we call salsify.

They ate and drank till midnight, studding their jollifications with small talk and paradoxical

cal remarks, the brilliance of which decreased with the wine in the bottles.

Towards the end of the repast, Violetta, hearing nothing but oaths and laughter, returned to take her place on Salvatore's knee. Displaying the young girl's breasts, he gave his friends to understand that she had two love fruits equal in whiteness, firmness, weight and perfection of form. Then he baptized the twins in d'Astri wine which tastes of muscat grapes. She laughed, doubling up over the table. Drops of wine sparkled for a moment on the tips of her rosy breasts, then fell, one by one, on the marble.

Colonnese had fallen asleep, no doubt to dream of his wife. Baccio followed him, falling in a heap on his bed, his flesh possessed by a vast distress. But he did not dare to close his eyes for fear of seeing the naked and delicious image of Violetta stand out in the darkness. And thinking that had he not been stupid and a coward, he might have been holding her in his arms at that moment, in that very bed, breathing in her bacchantic fragrance, learning the secrets of her wanton body, he cursed, for the hundredth time, the fate that made him a tender sentimentalist,

always on the lookout for love, but never attaining it.

He heard the voices of Palumbo and Violetta on the stairs. Then the adjoining room was filled with an amorous uproar, made up of laughter, kisses, sighs and soft cries.

In the intervals of silence, he could hear the carter's sonorous snoring on the other side. *He* wasn't suffering! *He* didn't clasp his pillow to his breast while gnawing the sheets to stifle his sobs. Plunged in brutish sleep, he was unaware of Baccio's agonies or his grief at being alone in the dead of night.

The room where the lovers lay, continued to be filled with the rising and falling of voices, with warblings and twitterings, like an organ loft in a church.

When at last he could hear only the snoring of Colonnese, Baccio closed his eyes. Worn out as he was by so much suffering, and stupefied by the wine, he fell asleep.

The room was quite dark. A strip of sky, bespattered with stars, filled the window frame. A cricket began to chirp.

Then an extraordinary thing happened.

While sleeping, Baccio saw a woman standing beside his bed. It was neither the dark Violetta, nor Maya, the siren, nor the daughter of Neptune, with the beautiful breasts under her orange sweater. No doubt it was one of those phantoms, whom Jean Bodin calls succubi, who glide into the beds of chaste men. To Baccio, she seemed a supernatural creature, an emanation of the night and its silence, one of those nymphs whose jealous influence paralyzed him whenever he addressed his attentions to earthly women. And, in truth, she was taller than the daughters of men, and as fair as Venus. A wave of golden hair broke over her hyacinthine robe, which was embroidered capriciously with pinks in bunches of three.

She untied the ribbons at her shoulders, and let her robe glide to the floor, very slowly, so that her body seemed to be born, little by little, out of the light; for, with this miraculous apparition, the whole room had been flooded with intense brightness.

When she had no more covering but her two-fold fleece, the nymph bent over Baccio, took his lips between hers, and stretched out at his side

in such a way that there was no part of her flesh which did not touch the sleeper's body, from her head to her knees.

He clasped her to him for a long while, stammering all the meaningless words that desire mingles with lovers' lecheries. Then he took her, in a vortex of music and perfumes, and entered upon that delicious death which possesses a man after love.

He still retained some of his ecstasy when Salvatore dragged him out of bed. It was daylight. Rosy clouds were floating in a transparent sky. Colonnese and his chariot were awaiting the friends. The better to enjoy the bliss that still possessed him, Baccio climbed to the top of the load and lay down on the sweet-smelling hay. The carter and Palumbo settled themselves on the seat. They set off amidst songs and the jingling of bells, while Colonnese cracked his whip, and Violetta, half naked, threw kisses from the window.

At the place where the municipal aqueduct crosses the highroad twice, Baccio stood up. He turned his back on the team, but he could hear the two cronies, squealing the love songs of their

native land, like pigs at an abattoir. At the same time, the jingling of the bells and chimes made a joyous clamor that grew louder as they galloped. The countryside was deserted. As far as Baccio could see, there was only the white road, curving gradually to the foot of a hill.

He smiled at the memory of the fair-haired hyacinthine image who had so thoroughly consoled him. He was about to lie down again when he felt a terrible blow on the head.

He rolled down upon the road, unconscious.

PART II

CHAPTER VII

Fever

HE opened his eyes . . .

It seemed to him that his hands and feet had become enormous and that his body was so heavy that he could never raise it again. In his parched mouth his tongue was like a piece of sun-dried leather. Just above his nose, something was pressing down upon him steadily, pressing and pressing, and crushing his skull. . . .

He moved his tongue slowly. He let his mouth fall open, then closed it again. He tried vainly to raise one leg.

Belphegor. Belphegor.

A shudder passed over him from head to foot. He opened his eyes . . .

There was a white wall in front of him, of some diaphanous substance as bright as porcelain, with a bouquet of five flowers, repeated on it symmetrically. The wall must be very high, for

Baccio could not see the top. He wanted to raise his head. A sharp pain shot through him at the base of his skull.

He did not stir again. He did not try to raise his head again. It hurt too much. Carefully, cautiously, he groped about him.

Belphegor. Belphegor. Gorphebel, Phelbegor.

His hands sank into some elastic substance. He was surrounded with yielding stuff. He was lying on wool, on silk. He was lying . . . Where was he lying . . . Where was he lying? He was lying on hay. He was lying on silk . . . on hay . . .

Belphegor. Belgorphe. Belgorphe.

Suddenly he remembered the blow that had struck him.

He was no longer in the wagon. He did not know where he was. He did not care where he was. He was too tired. He lay without stirring, his big eyes open.

By moving his eyes across that piece of wall, from right to left, though without moving his head (oh, yes, without moving his head) there were two, three, four, there were five bouquets across, and six rows of bouquets counting up. Five times six—that made thirty. There were

thirty bouquets on that piece of wall. There were five flowers in every bouquet. Thirty times five was . . . Thirty times five . . .

Belphegor. Gorphebel. Belphegor.

Was . . . a hundred and fifty. There were one hundred and fifty flowers. The six rows of flowers made, altogether, one hundred and fifty flowers, five flowers to a bouquet . . . One hundred and fifty divided by six—that made? That made? Twenty-five flowers in rows. Each row . . .

He closed his eyes. He did not want to count those flowers any more . . . He did not want to . . .

Belphegor. Belgorphe. Gorphebel. Gorbelphe. Phelbegor.

That word, devoid of any meaning, kept passing and repassing through his feverish head. It kept repeating itself endlessly, splitting up and recurring with its syllables reversed. Its parts disjoined and then came together again. Gorphebel, Bel-gor-phe, Phe-gor-bel, Gor-bel-phe, Phe-bel-gor, Bel-phe-gor. There were six different forms, two on bel, two on phe, two on gor. There were only six forms . . .

I want to sleep! I want to sleep!

What beautiful waters there are in the world! The most beautiful are in the valley of Stia. On the road to Alverna, a spring shoots from the rock like a rocket. It's so cold that it cracks any glass you dip into it. But there's always an old woman near the fountain, who will lend you a pewter cup. The metal is tarnished from the fumes.

I'm thirsty! I'm so thirsty!

The fountain at the Villa Torlonia! A huge eagle spreads a fan of murmuring waters about him. They bubble in the stone basin, they gush forth on all sides. When you plunge in, your body seems silvery. Your flesh stays cool for hours afterwards. When I get well, I'll make a trip to bathe there. . . . When I get well. . . .

Once more he tried to raise his head. A sharp pain shot through him.

Was he going to die like that? Without ever seeing anything again? Was he going to die? Dear life! Dear life! Was he going off like that?

He did not want to think any more. . . . He didn't want to any more. . . .

Bel. . . Belphe. . . Belphegor. . . Phebelgor. . .

One hundred and fifty divided by five? One hundred and fifty divided by five? That made thirty. Thirty divided by six, that made five. Five times three—fifteen. There were fifteen flowers in rows. Fifteen, counting upwards. Fifteen. Phegorbel. Gorphebel. Gorbelphe. Bel . . . gor . . . phe . . . six . . . fifteen . . . six . . . fifteen . . . fifteen . . .

Without moving a muscle, Baccio made himself very small, very small, so as not to have to die.

CHAPTER VIII

The Secret Gardens

"BE good, see! In two days you can go out and walk in the garden."

"I *am* good, Donna Carlotta. I will be good. But you must excuse me. You've kept me in this room for ages. I know it's very nice, and one could spend a lifetime here. But I've never been able to stay long in one room."

"Long? You were in bed less than three weeks, and it's barely a fortnight since you moved to the easy-chair."

"Ah, Donna Carlotta," sighed Baccio, "since you had the power to make me well again, why didn't you cure me all at once?"

"You are a big ninny! I'm neither a sorceress nor a sibyl, I assure you. You got well by yourself because you are lucky and have a thick skull!"

She piled the cushions around the invalid, who

grasped her hand. She was an old woman, with caressive movements, and dressed like a nun, in a robe with wide sleeves, a rope girdle, a blue veil framing her face and falling to her shoulders, much as St. Anne is represented in old pictures.

The room was rich and strange. All white and gold, and paved with a mosaic, showing Thetis and the shells. The walls were of polished marble, inlaid with a symmetrical pattern of lotus flowers, tied in bouquets of five. The vaulted ceiling arched above, like the open sky, and rested on a gilt cornice without ornamentation. In a dull gold frame, the spacious bow-window opened on a terrace with a balustrade where he could see a sheaf of broom flowers in an alabaster vase. Beyond it, there was nothing but a planting of trees, silver poplars, maples, lindens, Siberian dogwoods, that continued the whiteness of the room in the landscape.

All the furnishings, veneered with ivory or mother-of-pearl, harmonized with these quiet colors, while there was a profusion of pale yellow cushions on the pavement, on the chairs and

on the extremely low bed, which was supported by four marble dolphins.

Baccio dwelt unastonished in the midst of these splendors, for he never for a moment believed that they were of this world. Familiar spirits among those whose sympathies he had always enjoyed, had transported him to this château. A sibyl had cured him. He called her Donna Carlotta because she had told him to call her that. He accommodated himself at once to this marvelous existence: had he not always anticipated it? The sibyl took care of him, serving him devotedly. He ate and drank from costly vessels. He bathed in a tub of Carrara marble as cool and deep as a sarcophagus. He seemed never to have worn anything but cashmere and silk, so naturally did his beauty, further refined by his illness, invest itself with these elegances. He desired nothing unless it was to explore the garden which he imagined behind the white-leaved shrubberies. He almost never thought of his past life, except to recall his friend, but even that was with a gentle emotion in which there was neither melancholy nor regret.

"Tell me, Donna Carlotta, why do I never

hear any voice but yours? Is it because the spirits who brought me to you never speak?"

She laughed. "There aren't any spirits, my child. You were found under the aqueduct. You were brought to this house. Aren't you happy?"

"I am very happy, Donna Carlotta, but there are so many mysterious things around me. I would be happier still if I might explore the garden. It must be so beautiful, Donna Carlotta. When the breeze blows through the windows, it brings me perfumes that don't come from the trees I see from here. Behind those trees, there must be an enchanted garden, filled with flowers and waters, filled with birds, with walks of white pebbles. It *is* very beautiful, isn't it?"

"It is even more beautiful than that, my child. You shall see the day after tomorrow. Today you must rest and try to sleep a little."

The next day he said to her, "In twenty-four hours, I shall go walking in the garden."

He strode back and forth in the middle of the room, as if to prove that he was no longer weak but could walk. In his white flannel trousers and his silk shirt, which was wide open at the neck, he seemed slenderer and more supple. His body

moved freely under the light stuff. On his bare feet he wore Franciscan sandals, fastened at the ankle with a strap.

"Donna Carlotta," he said later, "are you always alone in the château?"

"Why do you ask me that?"

"I don't know . . . Yesterday I was half asleep. It seemed to me I heard a step on the terrace that wasn't yours. There was a sound, too, a very slight sound, barely audible, like tiny bells."

"You were dreaming!" said the sibyl with a trace of uneasiness in her voice. "There was no one in the house but me."

"I suppose so," murmured Baccio, "I must have been dreaming. I'm always dreaming."

But he wasn't convinced.

She found him next day, seated fully dressed on the balustrade, staring at the curtain of trees as if it were about to be raised for him.

"Don't tire yourself," she said, "and remember the path we take,—although that will hardly be necessary," she added, with a sigh.

He did not listen, he was so carried away with impatience. Neither did he see that she looked

at him regretfully, the way a mother looks at a child who is escaping her tendernesses. As he did not say anything, she started to walk ahead of him, turning from time to time to observe his impressions. Having skirted the clump of trees near an alley of boxwood, set apart for Hermes and Priapus, they traversed a succession of chambers in the form of grottos where bucolic personages, made of mortared pebbles, marine shells and conglomerates, tended lambs, made of sponges, and played noiselessly on coral pipes.

The last chamber opened on a verdant circle: smooth, thick turf, as velvety as a woolen rug, covered it completely. In the center was a round basin of violet-hued marble. The water rose from the bottom of the basin with a gentle gushing sound and poured so smoothly over the surface that it seemed one sheet of motionless crystal. Cypresses, planted closely together and carefully clipped, and cut to a proper height, formed a wall of somber green against which rose five columns of Numidian purple, each supporting a stone lotus. Near the columns, between the trunks of the trees, were five narrow doors, deep in green shadow.

"Each of those doors," explained the sibyl, "is the entrance to a different garden, though all five are really one garden under various aspects. It is useless for me to accompany you further, my child, for they are all laid out in such a way that one can explore them without a guide, and yet always come back to this fountain."

Baccio looked at the wall of cypresses and the doors, opening upon the unknown.

"Which must I enter first?" he asked in a troubled voice. "I don't want the first garden to be more beautiful than the others."

"Delightful child!" she said, shaking her head. "No one garden is more beautiful than the others. Alas, may good fortune guide you! But remember your way back to the white chamber where your old Carlotta will always be waiting to take care of you."

She kissed him on both cheeks and left him alone before the five shadowed doors.

The water, pouring from the basin, made a soft continuous sound. The strong scent of the cypresses filled the small garden. When the wind rose, a bright wavy undulation played around

the vine-clad walls which abruptly shut out the august blue of the sky.

Baccio hesitated some time, facing the five doors. Then he chose the middle one, because it seemed exactly to balance the influence of the others, and hence the garden behind it must be nothing but pure rhythm and cadence.

He followed an arbor of holm-oaks and laurels with which the bower was so thickly overgrown that the light could scarcely filter through. It was a path of slow curves, of sudden turnings, so that it was never possible for the walker to be sure of his course. And in each of the angles, a jet of water, rising under an open spot of sunlight, flashed from the fingers of a statue, like a flower of diamonds.

Baccio, who was hurrying with a novice's eagerness, suddenly came out into the sunlight. He stood blinking for several moments. Then he walked toward the dawn-bright scene that lay before his eyes.

It was a succession of terraces which descended in broader and broader levels to an unknown depth. The topmost was narrow, shaped like a galley's prow, and so constructed that from it

one could examine the details of all the others.

Broad steps of pinkish stone descended from terrace to terrace, in a curved design that gave to the whole the shape of a lotus. Each landing-stage was covered with a pergola of roses, set on marble columns. Stone figures towered above the balustrades, jetting forth a rosette of falling waters which splashed back into a basin on a lower level. A high wall of laurels and plane-trees enclosed the terraces and their flights of stairs in a triangle, leaving free only a view across a plain, steeped in morning mists.

It was a childhood garden, which ran off, smiling, into the unknown. Its charm lay in the artlessness of its colors, in the virginity of its roses. It was bathed in an infantine light that was the effect rather of the marble than of the time of day.

Baccio, who felt he was being reborn with a new soul, saw himself in everything about him.

He hurried down to the lowest level without stopping. The terraces crowned a high cliff, overhung with trees. He climbed up again almost as fast, and returned to the galley prow from whence he could perceive nothing save the

flower-covered slopes and a sea of mist. But curiosity was stronger in him than delight. The artless spectacle of roses and of rose-pink marble failed to stir him so deeply that he was not attracted to the other gardens. He passed once more beneath the bower of holm-oaks, regained the semicircle with its cypresses, and opened the second door.

Again a leafy arbor led him, through a hundred windings, to an open space, dominated entirely by a fountain. Conches, amphoras, cornucopias, reclining river gods, dragons and sirens poured torrents of water into a vast basin where, on a marble shell drawn by sea-horses, floated the figure of a tall woman, holding in her hand a lotus.

The mystic flower kept recurring in the ornamentation and composition of the gardens, or as decoration on the statues, like an allegorical symbol or the device on a coat of arms.

This last garden, planted on a hillside, was all stone and water, without a flower that was not also of stone or water; without a tree, except the wall of limes and laurels which enclosed it, like the others, in a triangle. The waters rushed

through narrow channels, till they reached a row of fountains whose slender jets, shooting up close together, all curved in the same direction, assuming a thousand new murmurous fantastic forms,—worms, serpents, bouquets, little cascades and spray,—then they were swallowed up in a marble Acheron, only to gush forth lower down in a great circle of plumes, hastening on their way to animate the statues of nymphs and tritons in a grotto filled with liquid splashings.

The air was drenched with spray, with tremulous rainbows. Baccio fled from the showers that his steps occasioned on all sides, for the entrance to the grotto was guarded by a row of pygmies who watered the intruder most indecently.

He reascended the slope, with its cascades and groups of fountains, and returned once more to the open space and its cypresses, in order to explore the third garden.

It was not in the least like the other two. Everything about it was circumscribed and limited. There were neither spacious walks, nor terraces, nor fountains of water, simply several quiet pools filled with arum stems. The garden formed a sort of dale with barely perceptible

slopes. Its walks, strewn with mica and shells, encircled narrow plots of sward and flower-beds, so that revery stole on one amidst their silence and perfumes.

Its flowers were planted in profusion, not at the whim of some lavish gardener, but according to their color harmonies. Without being able to distinguish them in detail, the eye rested successively on beds of yellow and purple, of red and pink, on beds in which all the flowers were white, depending on whether vanilla, anemones, iris, tulips, mimosa, cytisia and jonquils, azalea, hyacinths, roses and hollyhocks, tuberoses, pinks, syringa, lilies or jasmine were blooming in the plots or the hedges.

All fragrances were blended in a single perfume so potent that it became palpable and seemed to drain between one's fingers. In these delicious haunts, there was nothing to arrest the eye which was not perfect in color, form and shadow. Proportions harmonized with so happy a dissymmetry, contrasts were set off with so judicious an art, that the garden, while distinctive in its parts, as a whole was indivisible.

The fourth bower led to a broad open space

planted with cypresses, box, bitter laurel and other dark-foliaged trees, arranged in geometrical patterns, so that nothing gay appeared in its composition.

Circular pools, with earthen edges, filled with stagnant water. Columns, bearing at their top a crimson lotus. A balustrade, which shut off the garden against a background of hills and valleys. All that was not black trees or blood-red flowers was deep red marble, almost garnet, the burning melancholy of which was in keeping with the solemn character of the vegetation.

There were no flowers on that terrace which were not as red as a mouth or a wound, yet despite its trees and its marble, the garden did not arouse a feeling of sorrow or sadness in the spectator's soul, but a somber and ardent voluptuousness. For Death conjoined with Love, that most ancient image, which a single spasm reveals to lovers, brooded in some secret way over this impassioned scene. And all that was to be seen beyond, valleys, hills, highroads and habitations of men, seemed like a remote allegory of life, perpetuating itself in futile agitation outside the embrace of love.

Nothing could be more fascinating to a voluptuary than that red and black garden. Baccio remained a long time, breathing in the sensual aroma which hovered about the resinous branches. They would have made a fragrant roof to shelter those long amorous possessions when hearts are merged through the breasts that hide them. Was love hidden among those walks? Was it love he felt stealing about him? Would he not find it in the last garden?

He entered its shady bower, urged on by a hope he did not even dare to express.

It opened on a grove of magnolias, which with their lustrous foliage and white flowers, symmetrically arranged, resembled bronze candelabra covered with flames.

Advancing among the trees, Baccio discovered a wall of green marble, constructed in wide arches, and very high, smooth and uniform, without any projection that would afford a foothold for scaling it. In the middle was a door of ebony, with five lotuses traced on it in gold. It had neither lock nor knocker, but was let very skillfully into the wall. Above its coping, the tops of palm trees could be seen, tossing.

Suddenly there seemed nothing in the world for Baccio but the garden shut behind that door, where love, no doubt, was captive. He threw himself against it, timidly at first, then violently, beating on it with his fists and feet, pushing against its heavy panels with his knee and shoulders. They were immovable. Not a sound responded to the cries of the poor simpleton who was simply bruising himself in futile struggle. But when he paused for breath, he heard vaguely, behind the panels, the same sound of tiny bells he had heard the day before.

Then he withdrew, realizing that some mysterious presence was accompanying him in all his vicissitudes, watching over his least actions, tacitly imposing on him a will stronger than his own. He was too used to manifestations of the supernatural to resist this invisible power. The virtue of a single incantation, which he did not know, might give him the key to that garden. But his courage was gone: he felt as weak as a child. His ramblings since the morning, the emotions he had experienced in the presence of so many marvels, that last effort he had made, had

exhausted his still ailing body. He remembered the sybil and walked toward the white room.

In the first grotto was a table, all set, and a couch covered with cushions and fur robes. Baccio went no further. He did honor to the viands with an appetite sharpened by his wanderings. Then he lay down on the sweet-smelling fur robes, amongst the stone shepherds who were leading their sponge sheep to pasture under stalactites of spun glass.

For three days he did nothing but wander from garden to garden, learning their most secret seductions, for they were so vast and so various in their details that he constantly came upon new beauties.

He was forever seeking something that he felt vaguely about him, following him in all his comings and goings. He returned to the closed door to listen for the faintest tinkling of bells behind its ebony panels.

He never met anyone, but he knew that the occult world was active in his service, for, in his rambles, he would always come upon tables of food in some garden-house or verdant arbor, and

couches for sleeping, or fresh linen. Though he never saw a withered flower or a fallen leaf, though the fountains were always clear and of the same fullness, the earth moist, the marble tidy, the grass cropped, he never met a gardener on the paths, so that those beautiful abodes and their fountains, seemed replenished by some constant miracle.

The fourth day, Baccio had just bathed among the mythical throng at the great fountain and was running from cascade to cascade in the garden of stone and water when he perceived, behind a statue, a little round glistening object, which he picked up. It was a tiny golden bell, in the shape of a lotus, that, when he shook it, made the same faint sound he had already heard several times.

When he had handled it for a moment, his fingers were impregnated with a scent so sweet that no lily-of-the-valley ever equaled its delicacy. Without understanding the feeling that overpowered him, he began to kiss the murmurous trinket, and to dance, while he held it, tinkling, to his ear. Then he dressed again, for he

had been naked in all his beauty, and darted toward the leafy bowers, running like a mad man.

In the cypress garden, he halted to examine the little bell again. The fragile ring surmounting it seemed to have been made by a miser. Had it become detached from some ornament, some larger jewel, a frontlet, a necklace, an earring? Individual or with others? With four others, probably, as everywhere where the lotus appeared. Four other lotus flowers, like this, on purple columns. Five chalices, five tiny chalices, trembling against flesh! Five golden lotus flowers, like those below, on the door of the closed garden! Like those below!

He resumed his course toward the fifth garden, his heart throbbing, his knees laboring, seeming to tread on air without moving, as one does in dreams. He felt his steps slacken under a weight of anguish that kept increasing the nearer he drew to his object. He was barely dragging along when he reached the magnolias.

She was waiting before the door. He was not surprised, for he realized that he had never sought anyone but her, and that his agitation had no other cause. She was almost exactly as he

had imagined her, as long as he had desired her, but somehow more tender, more human. For she was unlike anyone he had come upon in books,—majestic, enigmatic, full of dark design,—unlike anyone the supernatural world had as yet revealed to him. She was as tall, and doubtless as beautiful, with long legs, narrow hips, and an adorable curve to her neck and shoulders. But there was a joyous tranquillity in her face, to which her fair hair, falling in a thousand ringlets, lent a still milder expression. Beneath her locks, which were tinged by the sun, and which gave her that narrow brow old Homer loved, two big childish eyes opened wide, two playful eyes, as young and caressing as her mouth, which never ceased smiling. He drew near her, step by step, forcing himself to smile, too, but feeling his lips tremble. He was quite close to her, so close that her soft breath brushed him lightly, but he was no longer aware of anything save her bright tender eyes. She drew back a step and raised her right arm. Little bells tinkled. On her wrist she wore a gold bracelet with four little lotus flowers, exactly like the other.

“I’ve lost the fifth!” she said, laughing. “Have you found it?”

CHAPTER IX

*Erigone*1. *Desire*

THEY were sitting in the grotto of the Nymphs, which was adorned with sparkling stones, and so constructed that it seemed always on the verge of falling into ruin. A loud sound of waters filled it. At regular intervals, a triton issued from the rocks and blew a sea-conch. Galatea appeared, borne on a huge shell, drawn by three dolphins, whose mouths spouted water. Simultaneously, two naiads rose to the surface and formed an escort for Galatea. The stone figures then entered a dark cavern in procession, to return later in the same order.

"For eight days I have been beseeching you in vain," said Baccio. "There isn't an amorous word I have left unsaid to you. What must I do to move you to pity?"

She smiled without replying, and her gleaming

teeth shed a luster about her face. She, too, seemed one of the grotto's deities. Like theirs, her robe was as fluid as the water and made of some sea-green stuff, embroidered with lotus flowers, which seemed to float about her whenever she moved.

"I know nothing about you," continued Baccio. "I don't even know who you are. I don't even know your name."

"What difference does it make?" she answered. "Call me any name you like. It will be more beautiful than mine, I am sure, for your love will suggest to you the sweetest syllables."

"You are a nymph, aren't you?"

"Why do you want me to be a nymph?"

"Because you are too beautiful to be a human creature. You are the spirit of this lovely garden. Aren't you Calypso?"

"No, I am not Calypso."

"Erigone? Glauca? Arethusa?"

"Erigone . . . Let us say that my name is Erigone. I will be all that you want me to be . . . On condition," she added, seeing him on his knees, "that you yourself are more calm. . . . Look, there is my sister, Galatea, returning."

The rock slowly opened, and the nymph's white nudity emerged from the shadow on her gilded shell while the triton clove the water and blew upon his conch.

"You are more unfeeling than that statue," groaned Baccio.

"Listen, Baccio, for a man of intelligence, you use the most hackneyed expressions in making love to me."

"Perhaps," he said quickly, "because there have never been any others since there were women like you and men like me."

But he presently reproached himself for his impatience. Since he had been with Erigone, he had lost all control of his actions and words. Life seemed to have ebbed back abruptly, leaving in its void nothing but disquietude. In all probability, what he felt was not desire, for he loved her far more than he desired her. It was an obsession to know if she would or would not be his. That certitude seemed indispensable to him, without his knowing why. Yet he loved her enough never to have possessed her, had she wanted it so. Yet this question of yes or no was so agonizing that he was capable of the most

extravagant resolves to rid himself of his torment.

"Don't you understand," he said, "that this expectancy is the very thing that divides us, that it is like a wall between you and me across which it is difficult for us to understand one another? I know very well that I ought not think about it and that it is useless to speak of it to you. But the idea paralyzes me, strangles me, obsesses me to the point where there is no room left for my love. I would not know whether I loved you if I did not discover it when you are away from me."

"It is a fixed idea, my friend. Abandon yourself to what happiness you have."

"Ah! how set you can be! Is there nothing in you but indifference?"

"It's you who make me that way, Baccio. You think of nothing but displaying your torment to me. But it's you who inflict it on yourself. I ask for nothing but to make you happy."

"Yet you know very well that there's no happiness for me but having you. My anticipation is stronger than my love."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "don't let's talk of either."

"No, let's talk about something else. . . ."

But they did not know what to talk about. None of the things around them aroused any interest in them, for they had eyes only for themselves, and there they could see nothing but the tumult of their passions.

Baccio's tender heart was alternately possessed by the most contradictory feelings. He armed himself with ruse and stratagem, formed plans of conquest in which every word was foreseen, every action foreknown. Then he would grow desperate and think only of fleeing those gardens and their enchantress, of returning to his old sadness, since it, at least, knew no object.

He recalled Salvatore's counsels. He played the gay blade, the indifferent youth, and to convince himself that women will not resist violence, even attempted to surprise Erigone. But he soon abandoned that, for the serene affection, the voluptuous charm for which he loved her, had been rudely effaced. He came to understand that there are neither theories nor principles in love, but that everything is relative

to each man and each woman; and each man with each woman.

Then he resolved to talk to her constantly of his love, so that she might be bewitched by it at last. But instead of simply giving rein to his tenderness he mingled it with persuasion, with a forced eloquence; he strove to prove to her what he felt when he was near her; he insisted on stressing each of his emotions, with the result that he succeeded in giving her only a sense of spurious feeling, though it came from his very heart.

He knew quite well that it would have been better to say nothing, to leave matters to the season, to the headiness of summer. He even sensed that Erigone wished to choose her own hour, and that she had brought him there for no other purpose than to give herself when that hour had come. He promised himself to pass the interim in the charming diversions of innocent chatter and caresses, for love was, he thought at that moment, a delicate pleasure, to be tasted gradually. But in the midst of this factitious playfulness, his obsession would suddenly flood back on him, the yes or no of his existence would ob-

trude itself once more. And though he evinced all the eagerness of his twenty-eight years, and an ardor which was quite his own, he felt obliged to keep insisting on the lyricism of his passion, so that Erigone might perceive its depth.

Only once, one stormy afternoon, amidst the heady fragrance of the valley, did he say what he should have said, no doubt, because the flesh alone spoke in him.

Erigone was seated. Kneeling before her, he let both his hands stray slowly over his love's body, her shoulders, her breasts, her hips, her legs, whose form he divined through her robe. Then he laid his forehead against her knees.

"Let me . . . Let me . . ." he stammered, "my hands are possessing you. Let me dream that I possess you like this, and that every part of your body becomes mine as soon as I caress it, gently, gently . . ."

He did not see her put back her head, her eyes closed, letting his words lull her, with a slight trembling of her lips. Perhaps he might have taken her that day, had he not *thought*, had he not added, to make her consent, "I feel that we are closer to one another now, don't you?"

She sat up abruptly. The light faded. A gust of wind dashed the flowers, and the bees fled.

Walking beside her one morning, he said, "I am a child, I'm just a child. Don't treat me like a man. Don't make me suffer so. I don't know how to suffer. I am a child that wants to play."

He was thinking that he would gladly have clasped her in his arms till she was one with him, but he did not dare tell her so, and sought to move her to pity.

"I am not a plaything," replied Erigone.

"Ah!" cried Baccio, "you don't love me either as a child or a man. But I know very well, my dear, that I can't go on suffering like this always. I love life too much to suffer like this. I will go away. I will go far away from you. I will only suffer the more, but you will never see me suffer again."

She looked at him maliciously, for she knew he would not go.

Suddenly he drew her to him and, shaken by a sob, repeated softly, "I love you, I love you, I love you. . . ."

"Be still, be still," she cried, "be still, my love."

She stroked all his body. She gave him her

mouth to kiss, for so long that their breath left them, and they swayed one against the other.

It was before the door to the closed garden, in the very place where he had first met her. At that moment, he did not feel that Erigone was wholly his, but he thought that she would belong to him some day. So he let her dear mouth withdraw from him, their tongues disjoin, because he was sure now that she loved him, and that she would soon give herself.

This produced in him a tranquillity which was no doubt relative, but which until then he had not known. From that moment, he said less about his love, and so gave Erigone the desire to hear him say more. She frequently led their conversation around to that fascinating subject, and one day, when he was describing to her the imaginary voyages he had made with Jason, Æneas and Christopher Columbus, she even said, as she kissed his hair, "Talk about us, Baccio."

She led him more frequently in the direction of the magnolia grove and the ebony door. Did it please her to recall the memory of their embrace, or was she seeking, by a return to the same place, to renew it? Baccio did not seek to understand:

he was afraid of caresses, now that he had tasted their vertiginous delights. Some obscure instinct urged him to delay, with all his might, the moment when they would give themselves to one another. And the longer he tarried, in fear, the more Erigone hastened headlong toward ecstasy.

He asked her several times why that garden of palms was surrounded by such high walls, and why the door was never opened.

"It is the secret garden of the Song of Songs," she said, "where there is a sealed fountain, and beds of fragrant flowers. . . ."

He knew what she meant, and what burning images were concealed in the Poet's words: he grew quite pale, and leaned against her with a terrible shudder. For never again would desire speak with the voice of Solomon and the Daughter of Jerusalem.

"I am afraid of you," said Baccio.

"Do not fear me: I am sweeter than the fig."

But he went apart from her.

When he was alone, he no longer thought of what he must do to conquer her: he was filled with a tense expectancy. The hours no more had length: there was simply one unique hour, one

vast, illimitable present. And when Erigone was beside him, that hour became immeasurable, as if in it all existence were suddenly summed up.

She, in turn, seemed restive. She no longer made those playful, rather sceptical remarks that lent her so peculiar a grace, like a child who is indolently cruel. Her words took on a passionate accent. Her lids were heavy. Her young eyes darkened and softened. One would have said that she was striving tirelessly, in her somewhat hesitant way, to bring herself closer to Baccio. Every day her robe became thinner until it was no more than a wisp of mist about her thighs.

Thus attired, she led him toward the closed garden. She did not hasten, but amongst its masonry and walls of laurel, she found hidden passages that shortened their path. She walked ahead of Baccio, and her perfumes floated behind her, so that he seemed a captive in their toils. Near the marble wall she began to run. Baccio ran after her. Then she uttered a cry, swayed for a moment, and let herself fall just in time for him to catch her in his arms.

He raised her against his breast. Her beloved face was sadder than regret. And indeed, did

he not feel a like sadness in himself? He gazed at her closed, her tightly shut, eyelids, her mouth which seemed as though extinguished, her strangely pallid cheeks: and he saw himself in that anguished face as in a mirror. Both of them were experiencing that bitter moment when two beings in love are driven violently to its delights.

The black door was ajar. With Erigone lying, so limply, so proudly, yet the least bit mortified, in his arms, he pushed open the panels with his foot.

They closed behind him. All he saw was a garden of palms, with soft shadows, splashes of sunlight and, near a fountain, some skins spread out.

Their bodies interlaced so tightly that there was nothing in the world but the knot of their embrace.

2. *Love*

It was a square garden, surrounded by a gallery of low blind arcades supported by wreathed columns, inlaid with mosaic. The roof of the arcade was of rose tiles, resting on a wall of green marble. On this wall, long tapestries were draped

from top to bottom. They were woven in such gay colors that they looked like sunlit landscapes between the arches.

The garden itself was one great field of thyme, marjoram, mint, rosemary and a thousand other aromatic herbs which yielded their perfume when crushed.

It was planted without order or symmetry. Smooth-trunked palms shot high into the air in a single fountain-like burst, tossing their ecstatic fronds up to the light. Set here and there, by a kind of consistent whimsy, were huge earthen urns, containing cedrates with fruits as translucent as lamps. In the midst of the fragrant field lay a circular pool on which red and white lotus flowers formed a capricious design. The whole garden represented harmonious and voluptuous imagination, that is to say, love itself.

It did not occur to them to leave it, though they had been there many days. The little universe surrounding them was still too vast for their embrace. For the whole world was encompassed in their two bodies. In their own eyes they beheld the most beautiful horizons; and in the inter-

twining of their bodies encountered the most magnificent adventures. When they found themselves mouth to mouth, breast to breast, so tightly conjoined that there was almost no part of their flesh that did not touch, they seemed to hear not only earthly voices, the sounds of life and of the elements, but even the grand tumult of the spheres as they plunge across the skies.

Their existence unfolded in their love: nothing distracted them from themselves. A mysterious company served them. The power of the nymph, thought Baccio, extended to a host of invisible spirits who spread the table, prepared their couch and surrounded the lovers with silent and delicate attentions.

It was almost true. Those strange servitors were never heard to speak or step. It was only faintly that the clinking of crystal or of silver once or twice revealed their presence. When the ecstatic lovers had fallen asleep, cheek against cheek like the twin slopes of a dale of flowering hyacinths, the silent band made ready for their awakening as they bustled to and fro under the arcades.

When they opened their eyes, the lovers found no one but themselves, so close together that they seemed to be continuing the same caress, doubtless because their desire was awake even as they slept. Then they would look about them. Everything they saw recalled them to their love, and everything they did served merely as a pretext for new embraces, for their hands and lips sought each other whenever they were parted for a moment.

She played on the word *Baccio*, which also means a kiss.

"*Baccio! Baccio!* You are all kisses. When I speak your name, I feel your mouth on mine."

"You haven't a name any more. Your name isn't *Erigone* now. You are *Aimée*, the Beloved. You are me. You are us . . ."

He murmured things like that, which no longer make sense when set down on paper.

"Do you love my mouth?" she asked. "Do you love my tongue? Do I please you in every way?"

Every time that he kissed a part of her body, she would murmur, "Does that please you?"

There was a trace of anxiety in her voice, al-

though she was very beautiful, and he thought her still more beautiful because he loved her.

He did not answer. He let his lips brush languorously along his love's body.

Seeing his eyes gazing afar off, she said, "What are you doing? Are you forgetting me?"

"I am making a journey," he said. "I am making a long journey in a land of sweet-smelling herbs. Every part of your body has its perfume, and I am going from one to the other, like a dealer in gums and essences. . . . Wait for me, I shall return soon!"

He departed again, descending to her cool, bare feet, which smelled of vervain, so that she seemed to have crossed the field, without shoes, in the morning dew.

When he returned, laden with fragrances and as rich as a Bagdad merchant, she received him with the transports of a woman who has been too long left alone. From that playful promenade, they passed by degrees to more ardent joys, seeking in themselves, in the depth of their flesh, beyond all sighs and murmurings, beyond all consciousness, in the ideal light which their passion

enkindled, the great mystery of life, the origin and the end.

They rose again, smiling. For in love they had established contact with primitive forces, had rediscovered the wonderful games of childhood.

"What do you want me to be?" said Erigone.
"Do you want me to be a statue? Or a bird? Or a tree?"

"A tree! I want you to be a tree."

He thought she would go back under the bark where the garden nymphs live. But she stood erect, her slender torso bent like an adolescent stem, her arms, slightly raised, supporting her hair which fell about her, a mass of golden bloom; she looked like a cytisus.

"Little girl," cried Baccio, "I love you. Can it really be you who was so cruel, so cold, so reasonable? How you made me suffer! Your eyes were so wicked that they used to turn black." And, when she lay beside him again—"Make your eyes look wicked, to see . . ."

She wrinkled up her forehead and half closed her lids; but love swam in her eyes. They laughed, putting their faces close together, eyelashes fluttering against eyelashes.

The little bells on her bracelet tinkled in the midst of their kisses.

"Let's make believe," he said, "that you are Paradise. . . ."

Two of his fingers strolled slowly over her bare shoulder, like gravely moving legs.

"Who is that important personage?" asked Erigone.

"That isn't a personage. It's Dante and Beatrice, visiting Paradise. First," he explained, making the visitors continue their walk, "they come to a valley of myrtles, and two hills covered with jasmine, each alike, the top of each rosy with the light of a perpetual dawn."

The Poet and his Lady traversed a field of madrigal, stopping for a moment at a tiny ravine, then were lost in a triangle of tangled plants that might have been grasses, they were so soft and silken.

"My love!" sighed Erigone.

Suddenly, they lay face to face, with rapturous glances. They spoke words so passionate that they can never be recalled, for they had no real meaning and were lost in the whirlwind which carried away the two lovers.

That day they heard the first grasshopper. Its ritual song, rising with the rising sun and dying with its decline, mingled with their caresses. It vibrated fervidly, incessantly, through the glare of the day. The heat was heavy, the palms hung as though crushed. Erigone decided to bathe in the fountain. She glided among the flowers which drew back slowly at her familiar approach. Then she stretched out in the shade, with shameless indifference, while through the strands of her hair she watched the sun creep up on her.

"Watch the sun mount my feet," she said to Baccio. A few moments later, "Look, love, he's gliding between my legs. He's on my knees. Come quick, love, he's going to take me."

Doubtless because he was jealous, he carried her farther into the shade.

They began to take note of the creatures and things which existed on the periphery of their love. The field was filled with bees and insects as brilliant as gems. Erigone, bending above their labors, discovered diminutive insects whose ends were as vast as conquests. These tiny creatures were agitated by an egoistic purpose from

which nothing, neither danger nor the laziness of the day, could deflect them.

"How they work!" she cried. "They almost never think of love."

Baccio said nothing: perhaps he was thinking of his destiny.

Lying side by side, they sometimes watched the play of light. It streamed through the motionless air, with quiet certainty. It caressed the marbles and clung to the branches like fruits or garlands. But when the wind rose, it dappled the shadows. In the heart of its tranquil splendor, the song of the grasshoppers reigned absolute. When a cloud passed, their song ceased, as if it, too, were an emanation of the sun.

So the two lovers, who had dreamed of fulfilling life, felt life taking possession of themselves.

One morning Baccio wanted to look at the tapestries with which the arcade was hung. They made the round of the galleries, each of which told a similar story. It was the story of those imaginary lovers immortalized for us in books. There was Daphnis and Chloe on the shores of Lesbos, or in the grotto of Pan, and Lycenian

instructing the innocent youth in pleasure. There was Renaud in the woods of Armide. Amidst towers and enchanters, the idyl of Aucassin and Nicolette. Ali-Nour and Anis al Djali. Romeo, Tristan, Renzo and their companions. All their lives long they loved each other. They died for one another or were parted in anguish. Neither time, nor adventure, nor any transient desire could detach them from their unique passion. Usually they were buried in the same grave where their ashes merged as their bodies had mingled.

After glancing at several scenes where the caresses had a particularly lifelike appearance, Erigone and Baccio passed from picture to picture with anxious humility. They felt how small a thing was their poor human love compared with those grand, eternal passions. For they did not know that poets had created them in the depths of their own aching hearts because they had never experienced them on earth, and had embellished them with all the thrilling words they had never been able to speak.

Thus it was that when they had looked at the last picture, which showed Baucis and Philemon,

so sweetly commingled in their love that their bodies, changed to trees, intertwined their lives forever, feeling the same breeze murmur through their leaves,—they did not dare return to that couch where they had known one another, but went forth from that garden, side by side, hand in hand, without looking one upon the other.

Moreover, they felt, in some obscure way, a need to continue their love amidst new scenes, and they wandered through the various gardens whose influence they sought anew. But they forsook the gay terraces and sprightly waters that no longer gave them more than a childish thrill, to abandon themselves to the warm sensuality of the valley or the somber passion of the red and black garden.

It was there they preferred to stay. Its purpleal setting was more in harmony with that melancholy which little by little was stealing upon them. There everything was motionless, mute, against an unsettled background of hills. Every flower, pouring forth its blood amidst the dark foliage, had the appearance of a bitten mouth, a bruised organ of sex. Like everything else, the gloomy waters of the pools reflected the

image of a grieving earth, of a mourning sky.

The lovers exchanged embraces that resembled farewells. They possessed one another in a sadness that was often exquisite, striving, through their kisses, to forget everything that was not themselves, making themselves smaller and smaller in their souls, the better to penetrate one another.

They desired to die that way, sensing that after the joys they had known, life could be nothing but a bitter awakening.

3. Decline

Valiantly they strove to retain the love that was forsaking them. Unable longer to renew it, they endeavored to renew themselves. Every day Erigone came to meet Baccio in a new robe or head-dress, to excite his desire by surprise. He, on his part, sought to vary their meeting places, for he hoped that by surrounding themselves with unfamiliar things they might discover some happiness they had not as yet experienced. Neither of them was conscious of this grievous conflict, and despite the perturbation with

which they waged it, believed they were continuing their old felicity.

In the gardens there were shelters of all sorts, pavilions of silence, grottos and galleries filled with charming contrivances, hothouses seething with tropical scents, elaborate retreats where desire could slowly mount amongst the cushions and heavy draperies.

They stayed in them, one after the other, a day or longer, sometimes only for an hour. Once they found their bodies intertwined, memory, like an importunate visitor, revived, and spoke to them in a low voice of ecstasies they no longer felt, of laughter and of sighs that were no longer known to them, spoke so softly from the very bottom of their hearts, that it was with difficulty they heard it. But without hearing, they knew what it meant. There was no retreat so secret, there was no embrace so tight, that memory, with all its regret, could not penetrate. Probably they bore it within themselves, in their hair, in the folds of the garments, in their flesh, in their words, in their glances. . . .

Once they realized how large a part this melancholy memory played in their love, and

sensed that there could be nothing in their new affection to equal their past joys, they again sought out those places where they had experienced them, in an effort to recover at least their form.

That is how they came to return to the grotto of Galatea, that cool cave filled with the splashing of waters, where they had spoken of their desire in times past, before they knew the rare joy of belonging to one another. But no longer having cause to be occupied wholly with themselves, with their confessions, their afflictions, their anticipations, their interest fastened on the play of the waves and the movement of the statues. The regular appearance of the nymph and her marine cortège, the triton's music, the pompous emergence of the group, soon seemed monotonous and a little ridiculous to them. They were moved almost to laughter by this persevering rebirth from the rocks.

Alas, what they no longer possessed was children's souls.

They visited all those places which they had merely glimpsed beyond their love. They were astonished to find them changed. They wondered

if this was owing to the flowers, or some arrangement of the flower-beds, or the way the shadows fell, or the hour or the season, for they could not believe that the change was in themselves. Nevertheless, they never dared return to the garden where they had known one another. Later, as they were passing under the magnolias, they noticed that the door had reclosed.

Presently they began to talk of things outside themselves. They felt that need for confidences which takes hold of lovers when they have exhausted love's first delights. Not that they sought to know one another better or to explain what was affecting them, but because silence, instead of uniting them as before, began to separate them.

When their limbs unwreathed, they no longer lay with eyelids closed, the better to see one another in the darkness of themselves. They let their eyes and their thoughts stray, while they carried on that friendly chit-chat, the charm of which they felt, though its warmth was lacking.

Erigone was the more reticent, doubtless because she had more to say. She maintained a complete reserve on the subject of the location

of her gardens. Baccio never knew what plain it was he saw from the terrace, or the name of the country he could descry. He believed himself to be in realms which had nothing of reality about them, and which the supernatural world had caused to exist for him alone.

He thought he had to talk about the women he might have possessed before her. He told her how he conquered all those whom he had merely desired. He described them as far more beautiful than they had appeared to his eyes, while investing them with romantic details. He mentioned their names: Irma, Livia, Maya, Violetta, and others.

Erigone, remembering the alarms of inexperience he had evinced in her conquest, thought he was probably dreaming aloud, and let him dream. But as he had on his neck a beautiful little blemish that naturally attracted one's lips, she set hers on it, saying, "Naughty boy, you've had too many kisses on this spot."

So the wiles of waning love grew upon them.

He also spoke of his book, which would, he asserted, take in the whole realm of chivalry at one glance. The pinnacles of that glorious region

would be bathed in light by his book which, to Baccio's mind, was no longer an index, but a kind of epic.

"Will you mention the Foscari of Venice?" asked Erigone.

She pronounced those words with an aloof air which made her seem so remote in time that he strove to overcome it.

"Yes, of course," he replied. "As a family, they were given to violent passions. The men were involved in the most opposite factions for the sole pleasure of shedding their country's blood. The women have become celebrated for their magnificent and disastrous loves. Nothing could restrain them once a new desire had taken hold on them. They disappeared suddenly without anyone's ever discovering where they had gone to conceal their lusts. Ah, if I had not known you, I should have desired to love one of them, and have met mystery face to face in her eyes."

"Look into mine," she said, opening them wide.

But he no longer saw anything mysterious in

them, only a passionate summons that drew them, in spite of everything, to one another.

Then they knew that they could no longer find, in their caresses, the raptures they had known there hitherto. Yet though their embraces had lost the ardor that inspired them, they were so delightful still that it was pleasant to indulge them, however lacking in fire. And as human happiness cedes to circumstances, they began by contenting themselves with these delights, since they could no longer enjoy those transports which raised them to realms of pure contemplation. They might have grown used to their poverty had they not possessed lofty souls, living constantly in revolt.

Then they experienced the distress of first farewells, the kind which are latent, unformulated, deep within the flesh itself, the kind one does not dare avow, even to one's self, but which lovers feel growing within them, in tense anxiety.

They remained lying, side by side, she resting against Baccio's breast, her head on his shoulder. They did not say anything to one another, but they shared the same thoughts. Now and again

he caressed her fair hair: she pressed against him slightly. Then they resumed the thread of their dreams, taciturnly. Nothing remained but that sadness which united them as before.

When they abandoned themselves to their desire, there awoke in each, in the effort to revive the ecstasies they had once partaken of, the image of another woman, of another man. It was to such phantoms that they now reuttered their murmurs and sighs. Ah, what difference did it make—if only they wrung a bit of joy from such deceptive adultery. But when they withdrew from one another's arms, they no longer recognized each other, and their bodies, satisfied by empty presences, no longer felt gratitude. They remained together because they had too many memories in common to part violently. But in each there beat a solitary heart.

She came to think at times that the delights of love were perfect only when they are brief, and that to enjoy them without their spoiling, one must possess an implacable and eternally adventurous soul. She thought of those women whose life is nothing but a succession of transient passions, and who have no pity, either on their

lovers or themselves, for it is hard for a woman to renounce affection. But such women had an imagination that carried them beyond regret, beyond memory and all those bitter-sweets that drag along in the wake of waning love. They were eager to know the varieties of passion and sentiment, but once they had exhausted their emotion, they hurried on to other lusts.

Baccio did not believe that existence would be possible without Erigone, yet he felt all the ferment of his apathy mounting in him. He reproached himself for abandoning his book, as if love, even in expiring, were not a beautiful enough creation! He was not unaware that, had he worked, he would have reproached himself for not living. But he was too mental not to plague himself that way.

When they were again on the terrace of the red and black garden, he gazed out over the landscape, sloping off to the horizon. He could see a very white road, which, climbing the side of the hill, vanished behind a spur. He saw vehicles passing, men on horseback, sometimes a solitary man, or two men, talking as they walked side by side. So they would have done, he and

Salvatore, his kind friend, whom he had no doubt forgotten in the fullness of his joy, but whom he began to regret now that his happiness was waning.

"What are you looking at?" asked Erigone.

"The road," replied Baccio. "I have tramped many miles on the roads. They are an inexhaustible miracle, for all things in the world come joyously to meet you, with every step you take."

"My love," she murmured, "how far we are already from one another. . . ."

Her eyes were full of tears.

"Now do you believe," she said, with a tearful smile, "that I am a woman?"

Without answering, he kissed her eyes, for it really seemed to him at that moment that they were no longer anything but a man and a woman. She was quite yielding in his arms, abandoning herself to his kisses, perhaps,—or perhaps to the disillusion which was overwhelming her. Never had he seen her so sad or so weak. He forgot his own suffering and was seeking words of consolation when she drew herself up before him with that superb air that transfigured her

at times, and should have been her true appearance. Then she clutched Baccio, clinging to his lips in a sort of frenzy. "Listen," she stammered, "listen, my adored one! I love you. Whatever happens, remember always that I love you. Never forget that, I beg you. Never forget it. . . ."

In their sorrow they revived the raptures they had formerly known in the joy of loving one another.

The evening of that same day, he found her in the white chamber. Erigone had taken a notion to spend a few hours with him in the room where she had so often bent above his slumber as she was watching over his return to life. And that nothing might be lacking to the memory of those first moments when she had loved him without his knowing her, it was Carlotta who served them.

Though he felt a trifle constrained, Baccio was glad to see the sibyl once more. He kissed her hands a dozen times, while he begged her pardon for deserting her. Her expression remained sad as she said, indicating her mistress, "She is so beautiful, no one can see her without loving her and forgetting the rest of the world."

"No, Carlotta," said Erigone, shaking her head, "I have no power over the fancies that haunt certain spirits."

"Ah, your own fancy is more cruel. . . ."

"Leave us, Carlotta," interrupted Erigone. "She is jealous," she added when the sibyl had gone. "She loves you like a mother. She hates me now because I have taken your affection."

Baccio was like a child who feels the ghosts of old stories hovering about him.

"Let us eat and drink," she exclaimed, laughing.

The table flashed under the light of the candelabra and lusters. It was strangely appointed, for the service, with the exception of the silver, was all of Venetian glass of an almost black color, shot with powdered gold. The light did not refract from this extraordinary substance as it does from a crystal surface. It was reflected as in a mirror. The wine, especially, took a peculiar hue from it, seeming to be set in a gold-work at once magnificent and murderous, like the damascene of a dagger.

Erigone wore a robe that was just as gorgeous, its deep purple velvet sewn with golden palms

like those one sees at Veronese's feasts when he seeks to heighten the effect with an amaranthine page. She was proudly painted, but her pallor was discernible beneath her rouge.

She offered Baccio a goblet. It was a wine of Castelfranco—Venetia, she said, taken from the vines of the Foscari who had been lords of the place in their day.

They talked of those great lords who loved the cultivation of their vineyards, and who were never so carried away by the cares of war or glory that they did not return to their trellises. Baccio spoke of that Giammaria del Monte, who was Pope under the name of Julius III, and who had a vineyard at Porta del Popolo where he amused himself while he forgot the duties of his pontificate.

The two lovers seemed to recover the amorous springtime of their love. They smiled to each other across the glittering board. Baccio drank in sport, or perhaps for pleasure, to his mistress; to the Foscari of Venice, to the Pope del Monte, to all the princes of the Church and of the Sword who now lay slumbering, like father Noah, under the insidious vine-leaves. That wine

of Castelfranco was sweet to the tongue, rich to the palate, warm to the throat, and one drank it whether one wanted or not. And the oftener Baccio raised his glass to the memory of the illustrious vine-growers, clerkly or lay, tiaraed or coroneted, the more he felt a vinous hilarity mount in him.

"Don't drink any more," whispered Carlotta, passing behind him.

It was too late. He had undertaken a praise of Folly. It was as flowery as an April field, for he was a born poet. Then he began to speak of Salvatore whom he described as more beautiful than Narcissus, more loving than Leander. He talked of their joyous repasts at inns,—embellished with everything that friendship, abetted by intoxication, could conceive.

Erigone shouted with laughter, constantly pouring drink for her lover, so that he lost consciousness altogether and began to ramble and sing.

In proportion as his natural grace forsook him, Erigone stared at him with eyes in which there was no longer either gaiety or sadness, only a cruel and bitter resolution.

He rose, steadying himself against the table, babbling obscene words. As he reeled toward her, he upset the table with a crash of glass.

The lustres shed their light with a cold violence.

He seized Erigone, and throwing her down with a cynical gesture, stretched her out upon the cushions. She permitted him, her lips parted in a doleful grimace. While he was slaying her very flesh, tears seemed to course down her brow. . . . She rolled him from her and rose, twisting her hair which was drenched with lees.

"Wine!" muttered Baccio, "give me wine!"

She took a broken goblet, half filled it and poured it into her mouth. Then she bent over Baccio, set her lips on his, and slowly drained the warm liquor between his teeth.

He raised his hand and dropped it again. "More," he muttered, "I want more."

Then he fell into a deep sleep, while, kneeling beside him amongst the débris of glass and spilt wine, she gazed at him in horror.

PART III

CHAPTER X

Regret

"COME," murmured Baccio, still drowsy, "come closer to me."

Without opening his eyes, he stretched out his arm to draw Erigone against his shoulder. He did not find her, told himself that she was playing and remained for several moments in that state of somnolence where it is an effort for the mind to disengage itself from the phantasmagoria of dreams.

Then consciousness returned to him. He felt that his head was heavy, his mouth pasty, his back lame. As he turned to rest it, it seemed to him vaguely as if someone had taken away all the cushions and that he was sprawled out on the mosaic. His senses were so drowsy that he did not make the slightest effort to assure himself.

A bird, singing, annoyed him like a repetition. It sang five or six notes, always the same, and at

equal intervals. At the same time, a strange warmth suffused his face. Presently it became so hot that it disturbed him. Lifting himself with an effort on his elbow, he opened his eyes.

He was lying at the side of a road in the midst of a deserted landscape. The sun shone between the summits of a hill, and it was this which was burning Baccio's face. Over his head was a rounded vault of stone, bridging the road.

Baccio stared at the dusty landscape, the road curving to the foot of the hill, the vines fastened to the reed trellises, here and there a few cypresses. All these details came to him exteriorly, for in no sense did he take any account of his situation. What he saw made absolutely no impression on his mind. It was simply an indifferent reality set before him as before a mirror. There were fields, trees, a road, a hill . . .

Erigone!

He thought of Erigone! Where was Erigone? What was he doing there all alone by that road? Why was he not in the white chamber?

He got up but stood tottering. He felt shattered in all his limbs and overwhelmed by a sense of anguish that he could never surmount. He

strove in vain to bring some order into his thoughts. They were jostling about in great confusion. The one idea of Erigone, of Erigone not there, stood out at moments.

"Let's see," he said to himself. "This really is I, is Baccio. Am I really awake? Am I not dreaming? I was with Erigone last night. I must have gone to sleep with Erigone!"

For a moment he believed he was the victim of sorcery. All that he had seen and experienced, those marvelous gardens, that mystic love, was too beautiful not to be a dream. But he rejected that idea almost at once. One does not love an illusory woman body and soul. One's heart does not throb like that when one utters the name of a phantom. Erigone! Erigone! Her caresses were real. He bore them on all parts of his body. Was not her fragrance on his fingers, on his mouth, on his garments?

He examined himself from head to foot and found he was dressed as he had been the previous evening when he dined with his love,—the black coat, the polished pumps, the white silk shirt, wide open at the neck. He knew it, he could not

have been dreaming. He had really seen those gardens, loved that woman!

"But then," he thought aloud, "what am I doing here? Why am I no longer beside her? I can't have deserted her, can I? Only yesterday I held her in my arms. I am no longer in the gardens. Then where am I?"

Forcing himself, with a great effort, to study every detail of the landscape, by degrees he recognized the route he had followed on the hay-cart, when he accompanied Salvatore and Colonese. It was the same road that had unwound behind him while the two cronies were singing their love songs. And wasn't that the very turn he had noticed before his fall? It was the very place where . . . They had picked him up at the foot of an aqueduct. And then? It was months since then. A whole lifetime since then. But, good God! Where had he been? When? Why? Why had he returned? And when? And why here? How had he got back—to this very spot?

Suddenly he comprehended, and began to run in all directions, crying like a madman, "Erigone! Erigone! Erigone!"

No one answered him. There was no one on the

road, no one in the fields. The landscape lay in indifferent brilliancy. Slowly, the sun, which was mounting in the sky, diminished the shadows.

"Erigone!" called Baccio, turning to all points of the horizon.

He expected to see her appear, smile at him, clasp him to her. She would have on her dark robe, sewn with palms, her feet dusty from walking on the road. When that vision dissipated, he began again to call in a voice that was more and more wailing. But she did not come. There was nothing in that vast expanse that seemed moved by Baccio's cries.

Then he began to walk in a sort of stupor. For several moments, he dragged his legs after him, without any other action than that mechanical movement. By a natural habit of his vagabondage, he noted the peculiarities of the road, the number on a mile-post, a clump of trees.

Then, suddenly, he realized clearly that it was over, that he would never see Erigone again, that he would never again possess her. He felt flung back into his old despair, more terrible than ever now that he had experienced such joys as

other men could only dream of. Dragging himself to the embankment, he dropped down on the grass and began to weep.

When he raised his head again, he saw three children, holding one another by the hand, watching him. They were neither sympathetic nor mocking. They seemed to be astonished to see a man sob as they did when they had lost something. They could not know that this man was a child, and that he had lost everything.

He smiled at them as he dried his tears, so brightly that they were emboldened to ask him for money. Searching his pockets, he drew out a handkerchief knotted at the four ends, which contained something. At the same time, he felt a desire to be alone, so that no one might know of his treasure, for he guessed that it came from Erigone.

"Go away!" he shouted at the children, threatening them with his hand.

They fled without returning.

Baccio untied the handkerchief on his knees. It contained a crumpled paper and the little gold bell that had fallen from Erigone's bracelet. Nothing could have been sadder than that frag-

ile trinket separated from her who gave it life. As he made it tinkle in his fingers, Baccio lived over again, in desolation, the most impassioned moments of their love, their tenderest hours. Oh nights when her tired bare arm moved, wavering, in the air as if seeking a support. Oh nights when amongst the shadows, laden with amorous odors, no sound was heard but the rustling of tissues and languishing kisses. Alas, nothing remained of all that but this little metal trinket that took up almost no room in the hollow of his hand, and this crumpled bit of paper, probably a message she was sending him.

It was not even that. It was a thousand lire note. There was no writing on it, but it was more formal than a farewell. It told Baccio clearly that he was to resume the course of his life, but that someone wished to assist his first steps.

He turned it over in his hand. He studied its every detail, as if its engraving concealed a revelation. Holding it up to the light, he discovered a woman's head in thread in the white space. It in no way resembled his love. But, inspired by his regret, he traced an imaginary likeness between the little picture and her whom he had

lost. The note became a sort of portrait of her. He folded it again carefully, secured it in his handkerchief with the little golden bell, and returned them to the bottom of his pocket. Then he went on his way toward he knew not what, for he no longer had any other purpose but to rediscover Erigone's gardens.

He made no effort to conceal from himself that it would be a difficult undertaking. He knew neither the place, nor even the province in which they lay. Some mysterious power had transported him there and had brought him back again as he lay unconscious, sleeping. He had never thought to question his beloved on that subject, for he lived wholly in his love, and did not believe that there was any other universe. Had those really been earthly abodes? Were not those gardens the creation of some supernatural power? Could their profusion of flowers and the subtlety of their architecture really have been of human contrivance, planted in the soil of Italy? Baccio strove with might and main to believe they were, for he had no other hope of ever finding them some day, yet he felt in an obscure way that that depended on Erigone alone.

He recalled her words, and perceived the sense she had attached to them: "Whatever happens, remember always that I love you. Never forget that."

Some law of that fabulous world which had produced her, obliged her to part from him. She had done so with tears, and that sundering had left them both bleeding. For now that he had lost her, he forgot those sad hours when their love was flickering. So little constancy has man, even in satiety.

He trudged on for several days, without a goal, without direction, going where his feet took him, or the chances of the road. He believed he was more sure of finding Erigone in that fashion, for in the realm of the miraculous, nothing happens in a logical way.

When he had gone through several towns and villages, he paused to look at couples who passed him or whom he saw in rooms, at open windows. They seemed hideous, wretched, to him, bound together as they were by mediocre feelings of which by no means the worst was force of habit. Nearly always it was chance that brought the man and the woman together, without their ever

being swept away by any of those marvelous affinities of body and soul that had stirred Baccio and Erigone. He felt moved to pity by their feeble kisses which seemed the futile parody of those embraces in which the most beautiful gardens in the whole world had been forgotten.

He attempted to beg. But people laughed at this beggar dressed like a violinist, who tramped the roads in polished pumps. Besides, he no longer had either the manner or the tone of voice that are requisite for attracting coins from purses. And though an old professional showed him, with ironic condescension, how it should be done, he could neither knock authoritatively at doors nor penetrate houses, his head in the air, while demanding alms as a tribute.

He would have preferred to live, like Salvatore, by fortuitous trades, but he lacked his friend's gift of industry. He hired himself out to work in the vineyards, to load wagons on the docks, and for those mechanical jobs where nothing is called for but muscles. He was offered a chance as a notary's clerk. He refused it because if he stopped wandering about the country, he

would miss the opportunity of discovering Erigone's gardens.

"Remember always that I love you. Whatever happens, never forget that."

She would not have uttered those words if she had not meant to take him back some day. Doubtless, she would come, in her flowered robe, preceded by perfumes and the soft tinkling of her bracelet. He set himself to wishing it persistently, in the notion that such an act of will on his part could effect a miracle. Every time he went to sleep, he expected to awaken in the white chamber.

In this way, he reached Forsena, where they were harvesting the broglio, which is a magnificent black grape. This big town overlooks the Arno just above that gradually descending curve that carries the river's waters toward Florence.

It was festival time in that section. The streets were crowded with vehicles of all kinds, for the people had come in from the hills and the plains, with their old men and little children, each carrying a flask and a basket of provisions.

Flags, marine pennants, shawls, many-colored coverings, adorned the house-fronts. Two bands

were rivaling one another in uproar outside the church, while the bells were ringing a peal and people were setting off fire-crackers. On the Piazza, among the palms, which were as short and prickly as pineapples, was a merry-go-round, with sirens and gilded unicorns, several gambling booths, a shooting gallery, with no customers, and a miserable circus where they exhibited hairless animals and pregnant women.

Baccio came and went with the crowd, eagerly watching for some chance which might procure him food, for he was hungry, and still more thirsty. The wine-shops were filled with shouts and laughter. A delicious smell of victuals floated by in gusts. There is no memory, however keen, which does not give way to hunger (such things are understood only from experience). Baccio had become simply a man in search of food. He wandered from group to group, listening to the idlers gossip, and watching for some good-hearted devil and a friendly word to offer him a seat at a table.

A rather dense circle was filling all one corner of the Piazza. People were pushing and standing on tiptoe, at the edge, to see the speaker who

was perorating in the center, announcing miracles.

"It should be taken, gentlemen, with the very greatest precautions. It is not one of those concoctions whose praises are sung by a costly publicity on the fourth page of your newspaper, and which have no other result than to charm the money out of your pockets. My elixir does not need publicity. Its excellence is its publicity. One drop, pay close attention to me, gentlemen, one little drop of my elixir will prolong your days one week . . ."

"That voice," thought Baccio, "I know that voice."

"I don't ask you to take my word for it. I am no charlatan, trying to dupe a flock of geese, and if one of you were to offer me a thousand lire for a second bottle (for I give only one to each person) I would say to him, 'No, my good man, no. I am not a tradesman, I am a philanthropist!'"

"It sounds to me . . ." thought Baccio.

Over the shoulders of the crowd, he strove to see the quack, who was no doubt of short stature, for he could not make him out over the sea of heads.

"Write," the vender continued, "to Luigi, the village carpenter in Casato, near Palermo. He will tell you that, thanks to a bottle of elixir, sold him by my grandfather (for it is a family secret, handed down from the time of Pope Leo III) he, Luigi, has reached the great age of one hundred and forty-seven years. Here is his picture!"

"It must be he," cried Baccio, wielding his elbow. "It can't be anybody but him."

"But, gentlemen, don't go and abuse the virtue of my *Youth*. In the days of the first Duke of Milan, Alfredo Bronte, in the village of Cortomaggiore, in Emilia, was so imprudent as to swallow one whole bottle at a draught. What happened, gentlemen! Last year they had to hack open his skull with an axe in order to make him die because he was tired of living so long!"

A great sigh went up from the crowd. At the same moment, a hubbub broke out in the midst of its compact ranks. Someone was shouting, "Let me through, you pack of idiots, let me through."

There were blows and oaths. Two men rolled into the middle of the circle, and Baccio leaped up, shouting, "Salvatore! It's you, Salvatore!"

"Yes, it's me, my son," replied Salvatore, folding him in his arms. In a voice choking with sobs, he kept repeating, "My son, my dear, dear son!"

But suddenly controlling himself, he turned to the crowd, and pointing emphatically to Baccio, said, "And as for you sceptical gentlemen, behold the gratitude of this man! (Make an affirmative sign, my son!) At the age of one hundred and twelve years you see him as fresh and rosy, as plump, as strong, with as broad a back and as much hair on his head as he had at thirty! (Show your muscles, my child!) I cured him of growing old. And since then, he follows me around the world to express his gratitude to me everywhere. Such is the virtue of the *Elixir of Youth of the Hermits of the Thebaid*, the secret of which is known only to my family, and which I sell at one lira, one lira; no more, no less! One lira for a crystal flagon, stopped with wax, labeled and stamped by the state! (Ah! my boy, how glad I am to see you again!) No, sir, one only! No, sir, others have a wife as well as you! No need to crowd, there are twenty left! Pardon me, sir, this old man needs it more than you! Come back some other time! That's all!"

he announced in the midst of general protest, for fifty more arms were outstretched.—“I want to live, too, by God!”

“Come, my son,” he said when the crowd had scattered. “Let’s go to a wine-shop and drink that elixir that really rejuvenates mankind, I mean the good broglio that the vines give these ninnies for nothing. Considering how long they’ve been drinking the water from the fountain where I filled my bottles, they ought to have turned back more than a thousand generations.—But men are made that way; their imaginations are so strong that those who bought my drops are really capable of growing younger.”

“Salvatore, my kind friend,” Baccio kept repeating, while he laughed and cried at the same time.

“I’m chattering, my boy. Forgive me, for it’s my vice, and vices are the only things we have to forgive. I’ve looked for you everywhere, I’ve looked all over Italy for you. What have you been doing? What about your book? How queerly you’re dressed! You fell off the wagon, didn’t you? Where have you been since?”

"I'll tell you all about it," murmured Baccio, "but first, I beg you, my friend, let's eat."

"Ah, Salvatore, you blockhead," cried Palumbo, "what a fool you are, my good man! Can't you see that the boy is dying of hunger, and you feed him words. You serve him question soup and fried reproaches. My son, I'll take you to a wonderful place, where wines and ragouts increase and multiply for the sole purpose of delighting the palate. You'll eat so well that I'll see you growing under my very eyes!"

It was an arbor of bamboo in a little garden where there were bowling balls and terra-cotta gnomes scattered under the trees. The diners crowded the main room. There was laughter and songs, and a sound of pots on the stove. Salvatore preferred solitude, for he liked to hear himself eat. But he was so happy to see Baccio plunge into his plate with famished zeal that he forgot the food on his own fork. To compensate, he drank a great deal and talked still more.

"You may think, 'Huh, Salvatore, he's always the same!,' but I assure you I've been as miserable as a lovesick swain, not having you with me. I didn't even want to talk any more because you

weren't there to answer me. I saw so many wonderful things that you would love, things that I didn't understand before I knew you. Then I was sadder still, to think I had to see them alone, and it seemed like only half seeing them. As if you were my left eye, or maybe even my right eye, and I was only the other. When I'd eaten or drunk my fill, I'd say to myself right off, 'Has he had enough to eat and drink?' And when I had a pretty girl in bed with me, I'd say to her, 'You ought to see how handsome my friend is!' And I'd tell her what you are like. Quite a few of them said to me when I was leaving, 'Hug Baccio for me!' I told them your name is Baccio. You know,—Baccio, that's the same as saying *a kiss*. That made them think you were like a kiss. Why, what's the matter, my boy? What are you crying for?"

"It's nothing, my friend, it's nothing. It just happened to make me remember . . ."

"Eat those meat balls, my boy. There's nobody else in Tuscany can make them like that. No, I'm not hungry. You might say that I'm feasting on what you eat. If you only knew how I hunted for you! I went back over the road with Colon-

nese. Every time I was put in jail in one town or another, I'd ask if they'd seen you pass through. I searched in the libraries, too, but those people don't know anything. They asked me the number of your card. I told them, 'He's an educated man, he writes about big families.' They looked as if they were laughing at me. Then for several days I thought you might be dead, since I couldn't find you anywhere. But you know, you can feel friends who are dead so near you at times that you think you can talk to them or touch them. And I didn't feel you as near as that. Then I said to myself that you must be searching, too. So I waited till I'd run into you, for the world is not so big that two such friends as you and I won't walk down the same street some day. And so you see . . ."

There were two tears on his big, apish face as he took his friend's hand across the table, to squeeze it in his.

When Baccio had eaten his fill, they sat for some time, rolling pellets of bread, without saying a word. They could hear the fire-crackers at the festival and the organ of the merry-go-round,

whose crippled bass limped painfully after the melody.

"I don't want to force you in any way, my son," said Salvatore at last, "but you know how anxious I am to hear what you did while you were so long away from me."

"Ah," sighed Baccio, "there is nothing more beautiful or more bitter."

Salvatore did not dare say anything. There was a long silence. Then Baccio said, "I felt a blow, but I didn't feel myself fall. They must have picked me up by the road, or more probably I was transported by some power, I don't know what. When I came to my senses, I was in a chamber all of white marble, with a marble mosaic and a garden of white flowers and white trees . . ."

The diners had returned to the festival. The inn was empty. There was not a soul in the garden. Evening fell. One by one, the terra-cotta gnomes vanished in its purple shadows. The organ kept endlessly repeating its melancholy tune.

"She was called Erigone. On her wrist, she al-

ways wore a gold bracelet that made a little tinkling sound . . .”

He talked of their caresses, he talked of their happiness. Night had definitely settled down. He spoke of the ecstasy and sadness of his love, while the organ ground out its desolate plaint and the star-swarms glittered through the branches.

CHAPTER XI

Dialogues Along the Road

"AND now," Palumbo declared, "you must work, my son. We'll go across Umbria and the Marches as far as Fabriano and Ancona where I have some business this coming June. We'll go by way of Arezzo, Cortona, Perugia and several other towns that ought to be full of libraries and fine books. If they suit you, we'll stay just as long as you wish, and whatever you gather in those old books, I'll carry in my sack. From now on, I appoint myself guardian of your book and promise to take as good care of it as I do of you. On the way, we may encounter those enchanted gardens (there's no other name for them), for it's a country of fertile hills and flowing streams. On the outskirts of Cortona and Assisi, there are a lot of steep hills which overlook the plain."

"I'll do whatever you say," replied Baccio, whom hope was already beckoning down the

road. "My life has no other purpose but to find Erigone."

"But you've got to work, too, my child. You've got to work! You're carrying a great book in your head, and, as they say to pregnant women in my section: 'Your future is in your belly.' I used to let myself get lazy at times, but since I've known what it means, I've been more afraid of it than of death. When you've worked, you're as happy as a lark. You feel like flying and singing. You've got feathers and wings, and a little carefree beak that cares about nothing but eating. All the things you've longed for come one after the other in their own good time. Besides, you're so satisfied with yourself that you don't stop to count them. If you haven't got something, why, it's too bad, but what of it? For you really feel very much satisfied, and you say to yourself with a little bow, 'Isn't it wonderful, Salvatore! You've added something to your life. It's not a whole lot, but Hell, it's something.' And this is so true, that there's nothing in the world men envy more than the peace of mind of those who work. When you've got back to your book again, you'll see that things will go so well

that there's no happiness that won't come your way, and your beloved nymph will come back to you again without your taking the least trouble about it."

"I will work, my kind friend. I feel that you are right. You always dread a piece of work until you begin it. Then you know that there's a delicious peace in it. The towns you spoke of are stored with memories. The Accolti came from Arezzo, and the Baglioni from Perugia. In their archives I can find all the details concerning them. And perhaps some evening," he added with a sigh, "when my soul feels as light as you say, she whom I love will come to me."

They set out presently, traveling up the valley of the Arno, usually on foot, but sometimes in those public conveyances that carry worthy market women from town to town.

These vehicles are so low that they seem to have no wheels, and are closed with curtains like a litter. They are drawn by two old nags who want nothing so much as to be given their head, so that the driver, who is always a fat man, dozing against the side-guard, has rather

the appearance of being there as a counterbalance for the passengers than to guide his horses. The flies cling to the ceiling which is grilled hot by the sun. It smells of the stable and axle grease. Arms and legs are shackled by baskets. People sweat, and gossip, and squabble, without being able to move an inch. And when you'd think that there isn't room enough left for a straw to fit into, in come four or five more passengers.

So the two friends preferred to walk where they could chat with more comfort, and all along the way, they talked without stopping. To be sure, the greater share fell to Palumbo, who was never at a loss for observations on men, women or passions.

He knew all the dram-shops where there was good wine to drink, all the inns where the host excelled in this or that dish. They were only too glad to stop, for aside from the fact that they made good cheer, at almost no expense, Salvatore spent all day giving advice to sick people, distributing nostrums, reading palms, repairing and covering billiard tables and the tips of cues, telling fortunes with cards, clipping dogs and gelding cats, while in the evening, he would show

customers amusing physical feats, would strum the guitar, imitate the phonograph, play any instrument they brought him and do a thousand inventive tricks,—all for money, be it understood.

Almost every day, his talents, his eloquence and good humor would toss the lady innkeeper into his arms (which was the most profitable), or the maid-servant, or some niece or other of which there were always a half dozen lying around. Moreover, in all the villages they passed through he kept meeting a goodly number of old lights-o'-love whom he had deserted after one joyous night, when his destiny impelled him to new adventure. He was unequal to so much good fortune, and offered the tidbits to Baccio.

Baccio thanked him for his kindness and gently declined. Deep within his flesh was the memory of Erigone's caresses. There were no kisses for him but her kisses, no fragrance but her fragrance. Everything about him reminded him of her, from the flowers in the fields to the delicate light of the setting sun, which recalled the design and color of her robes. The morning brought back to him her youthful eyes; midday the

moist warmth of her body in an embrace that could no longer be untwined. He did not ever think of it sadly, but with an almost joyful expectancy and assurance of seeing her again. So burningly did love persist in him, that Erigone hardly seemed absent to him.

When he was alone in his room, he would take his handkerchief from his pocket and contemplate for long intervals the treasures hidden in it. Held up to the light, the thousand lire note showed him Erigone's profile, at least as he construed it by voluntary illusion. The little gold lotus-flower trembled in his fingers. And when he made it tinkle, while he closed his eyes, he could revive, one by one, the eternal moments of their love. In the evening, while Salvatore and his wench were making a great commotion in their room, he would lay the beloved mementos on the pillow, near his head, and fall asleep kissing them.

Women did not let his coldness rebuff them, for, besides his natural beauty, he possessed the sort of spiritual illumination which attracts them, and which is the reflection of desire. Salvatore used to reproach him gently for spurning

the prettiest girls and thus relinquishing joys which would never come again.

"You don't know what you are losing, my son, in passing up these little darlings," he said as he tramped beside Baccio. "Occasionally it happened, when I was your age, that I refused somebody because I had someone else in mind, or simply because she did not attract me at the moment. We men, we have our moments, too, like the women, but I must admit that we have them oftener. To make it short (for I'm a chatterer and I always get off on side tracks) I never think of one of those little pets whom I didn't want, without saying to myself, 'What a fool you were, Salvatore! You never spat in the plates they handed you, you never threw the wine they offered you on the floor, yet you passed up a certain little girl who had firm breasts and a very shapely bottom. You think you're a very clever fellow, but when the time comes for you to give an accounting to the Lord of the days He has granted you, you'll see how much the balance is lacking!' Since then, my son, I've accepted whatever delights have presented themselves, whether in the shape of a brunette, a blonde, a

black or red-head (seeing that I have no color preferences), though I've never indulged in two at a time, or three in succession. That's why I have no more regrets and can look back on the past with satisfaction. But think of the twinges of conscience which will overwhelm you when you think of all the little darlings you have not loved. You will beat yourself with both fists and cry, 'My God! My God! What a fool I was then!' But that won't bring back to your bed all the dear little pets that you let go by."

"My friend," said Baccio, "don't think I'm passing up the joys that life offers me. Only, they are not the ones you speak of. I still possess Erigone. Her caresses are sweeter to me than all that other women could give me. There is as much difference between her kisses and theirs as if they came from another world. When I clasped her in my arms, I held the earth, the trees, the sea, the stars, all at once. And now that she is absent I hold them still. Imagine that you held everything that exists in your embrace, even those lands that you have never known, even those skies that you have never seen. I have all that in me from Erig-

one's caresses. Should I risk losing that happiness for a moment's pleasure?"

"I see quite clearly, my son, that I can't tell you anything more about women or love. You already know far more than I do on that subject as well as the rest. I'm simply a poor creature, a little nothing of a man, and I go around picking up crumbs under the table, while you're eating white bread from damask. I've never had any but good-natured girls who like to laugh a little, and I've come to think, since you've been telling me about your beautiful nymph, that I still don't know anything about love."

"You know, Salvatore, you know, but you don't know about it in the same way. The love I've told you about is made up of dreams, of vague desires, of unexplored emotions, of delightful regrets. It saturates your very heart, your very brain, for the joy it gives you lingers not only in the senses, but in the mind."

"Alas, my son," sighed Palumbo, "that's not the love for me, for I've walked so much on the earth that it clings to my feet. The girls I've known have left me pleasant memories, but they've never burdened my thoughts. And

that's fortunate, you can believe me, for I've barely enough of the little brain God gave me to be always on the lookout for the coins as they flip from one pocket to another. You can manage love and learning at the same time because your head is filled with a pile of things that mine hasn't got. So from now on, it will be you who teaches me what love is, since you have learned in a better school. And when we find the enchanted gardens, you will give me a little nymph, a servant of yours, who will teach me a lot of things about the emotions, for I don't want to die without experiencing a few of the joys you feel."

"I promise you," said Baccio, "though I never saw a servant in the château, except Donna Carlotta, who isn't young enough to please you. But I've no doubt that there are pretty girls whose business it is to cultivate the flowers or wait on table. If I ask it, my beloved will surely let you pay court to one of them. But first we have to find her."

They made inquiries, in the course of their journey, about villas and gardens, and sometimes made long detours to visit them. But they proved

to be merely old parks, abandoned by their owners, with their woods cut down and their fountains dried, or else the gardens of wealthy bourgeois, with straight paths and sloping lawns, surrounding clumps of rhododendrons and beds of begonias. Only at Castiglione-Fibocchio did they find one which was dedicated to repose and orderly beauty. It was not Erigone's. It belonged to an Englishman who lived wifeless, with his dogs and male domestics, and occupied himself in retracing the itinerary of Lord Byron, that other sentimental vagabond.

The two friends talked so often of the gardens they were seeking that Salvatore knew every inch of their topography and could have drawn a map of their scheme and perspectives.

"I would recognize them immediately," he declared, "simply by the shape of the hills and the way the trees are planted. The day we finally discover them, I'll see them before you do. And if I had paid closer attention to the landscape in the places I've been through, I could tell you where to find them this minute. But until now I've always been more interested in finding out where you can get a good bottle and cutlets, and

for that I've got no equal, for I have a good stomach, my son, and a great thirst."

Talking thus of love and eating, according to the viewpoint each had of life, they passed from village to village, stopping nowhere longer than was necessary for Salvatore to shake down the boughs of the money-trees.

They stayed longest in the cities. Baccio worked all day in the libraries, and was nearly carried away by that deceptive joy of creating the reflection of life on paper. He interested himself in others' passions, crimes, loves and ambitions, to the point where he could almost believe he had no passions of his own. But he soon perceived that this tranquillity was simply lulling his pain to sleep for a moment, and that he would awaken again, a sad human creature with a wretched human heart.

At Arezzo, he studied the Accolti, particularly Benedetto, who, as tyrant of Ancona, hanged more than a hundred nobles and installed cobblers and millers in the positions of state. He investigated, too, the origin of Concino Concini, who was assassinated on the Pont du Louvre for

the sole crime of having been something in France without being a Frenchman.

But he could not persuade himself that work was a joy sufficient to efface the memory of those others he had experienced. The thought of Erigone mingled itself so imperceptibly in his studies, that one day he caught himself writing among his notes the words of her promise: "Whatever happens, remember always that I love you. Never forget that." He never did forget it. He thought about it every day, especially when he found himself alone in the libraries which, because of that, and of their shaded lights, their sedentary smell, and the pale color of their parchments, came to seem as voluptuous as bed-chambers.

Salvatore, during such times, applied himself to the thousand and one contrivances of his industry.

He could be seen walking in a somnambulant daze through the gardens and the streets of Arezzo, felt slippers on his feet. When he beheld before him a bourgeois of tranquil aspect, he would stalk him silently and arriving nearly on top of his victim, fling these words between his

shoulder-blades, in a cavernous voice: "Give me some money, I'm starving."

The victim, spinning around suddenly and perceiving a terrifying figure, with clenched teeth and burning eyes, the very face of the avenging proletariat, would fling him the money he asked for and escape as fast as possible. In this way, Salvatore made as much as fifty lire a day. He called it the starving man's game.

He also piloted two German professors who were making an archeological tour in Tuscany. He took them to Sansavino and Bettola, to show them the collections of Count Passerini.

Baccio had crammed him with information on the subject. He overwhelmed the doctors with it so successfully that they took him to be the greatest Etruscologist in the world, and gorged themselves for a fortnight on his lessons, while loading him with magnificent fees. By the third day he had exhausted his friend's data on the subject, but this did not prevent him in the slightest from continuing to discourse on Etruria and its primitive inhabitants, with a wealth of details of his own invention, which the two professors reverently noted down in their memoran-

dum books, and of which, on their return to Berlin, they made a very fat volume that has contributed not a little to strengthening the admiration of scholars the world over for German method and erudition. Which did not swell Salvatore's pride, for he never knew anything about it.

It was at Perugia, where he was too well known in bourgeois quarters to renew the "starving man's game," that he conceived a new function, which no one but he could have thought of, for nobody knew, as he did, the poverty and tastes of poor people.

Toward the end of the morning or afternoon, he would walk through the alleys with a stick on his shoulders and a chunk of fat bacon hanging from the end of a string. Looking very much like a fisherman who has pulled in a rasher of bacon from the depths of the sea, he would stroll slowly before the houses, calling, "Bacon! Bacon! Who likes bacon!"

The housewives, leaning out their windows, would call down to let them see, not knowing just what he was selling. He offered them his merchandise, and when they accepted, had him-

self conducted to the kitchen, where, on being shown the gently boiling soup, he would drop his bacon into the pot, and let it soak as long as they wanted. Then he would continue his rounds, carrying his chunk from soup-pot to soup-pot, and imparting to each the flavor of bacon at a very small cost. He charged four cents for anything less than four minutes, as long as the pork retained its flavor. Afterwards the price was less. And when the bacon began to fall to pieces, the immersion cost only two cents for a quarter of an hour.

Of course, during the time these sessions lasted, Palumbo never stopped cracking a score of broad jokes. His line in one hand, his watch in the other, he would tell the drollest stories, accompanying them with such comical grimaces that the women nearly died laughing to hear him. In the end, he was called in as much for his buffooneries as for his impromptu business. Sometimes he profited by these occasions to fondle the housewife while letting his bacon soak as long as possible: on his return from work that day, the husband found a delectable soup, for the rascal had stayed there nearly an hour.

The two friends used to meet in the evening at the best eating-houses, and make good cheer, while they recounted their discoveries and adventures. Salvatore listened devoutly to all that Baccio told him of the great families of Cortona, Assisi and Foligno, and, as he had an excellent memory, he began to discover bonds of interest or alliance between the various connections. He would refer to the Orsini or the Trinci as if he were speaking of Colonnese and his nephews. Baccio could not restrain his astonishment. Each day he noted his pupil's unconscious progress, and several times profited by his discoveries.

At dinner, he would confide to Salvatore's care the pages he had written during the day. When they tramped the roads, it was Salvatore who carried them in his sack. Little by little the package began to take on size and replace his cheap wares.

"Isn't it too heavy?" asked Baccio anxiously.

"Heavy, my son?" said Palumbo, heaving up his burden with a twist of his back. "You can add three or four times that weight to it. There's nothing you can write that wouldn't sit light on

my shoulders, and the more you put there, the better satisfied I am. I'm like the fellow in the band who carries the big drum on his back while the musician beats it with the sticks and the cymbals. He wasn't made for anything but to carry the drum, but he's as satisfied as if he were making as much noise as the drummer. So drum away, youngster! Be a virtuoso and delight men's ears! I'll walk ahead of you, as long as you like, without ever growing tired of it. In the end, they'll have to open their ears and listen to your music. Then they'll come crowding around you, and shouting, 'Bravo! Bravo!' while they applaud fit to give themselves blisters. But I, I'll be satisfied that I carried the drum. And without showing it, so as not to bother you at all, I'll have my own part in your triumph. I don't ask them to talk about Salvatore Palumbo, who was only a donkey carrying his pack across country. I'll think myself very happy to have lent my shoulders to your service, since I couldn't give intelligence or learning. So you can feel quite sure that I walk cheerfully beside you, and if your book was as high as the Asinelli

tower in Bologna, it would still be a joy to me."

"It's all your work," said Baccio, quite moved. "You are more than a father, my kind Salvatore, and I should never have done anything if you had not come to the aid of my weakness. It is to you I owe this book, and I am going to give it back to you. I am going to put your name on the title-page, as they used to do for the popes and princes who had pride enough to cherish the approbation of men of learning. But nowadays . . ."

"Nowadays," cried Salvatore, laughing, for he was as proud as if he himself were a pope or a prince, "they hand you ten lire and their blessings."

They trudged along, chatting by the roadside, stopping at inns, and making long halts in villages, at so leisurely a pace, and with such long detours to find the enchanted gardens, that it took them all winter and all the succeeding spring to cross Umbria and the Marches.

At noon one day, toward the end of June, as they were descending the valley of the Esino, not far from Ancona, they caught sight of the sea

between the hills. Baccio uttered a shout of joy, for he had not seen it since Viareggio. Salvatore, on the contrary, became as serious as his face would permit, and stopped short in the middle of the road, shaking his head sadly, as if some lugubrious subject were under discussion.

Baccio was worried. "What is the matter, my friend? Why the troubled expression?"

"Pardon me, my son, for having put off so long what I have to tell you. I've meant to do it for weeks, but I didn't have the courage. Finally I said to myself, 'No need to hurry, Salvatore, when you get to the sea, it will be time enough to speak. Until then, don't worry your boy, and let him work in peace.'"

"What do you mean?" cried Baccio, who was not accustomed to such solemn preambles.

"I mean what I have to tell you. There's no pleasure in it for me, I can assure you."

He sighed, stared at the sea and sky, sighed twice again, rubbed his finger slowly on the end of his nose, and began to walk on again.

"My son," he said, "it's June already. In my part of the country they're picking the lemons by now. And since the people down there have

nothing more to do now but wait for the green ones to ripen and to set the flowers, the festival begins and doesn't end for two months. Every morning, all the villages on the coast fire a hundred salutes in honor of the saints who bless the mountains and the sea, the lemons and the fish. They take the gold and silver images from the strong-boxes where they're locked up the rest of the year. The curates go from door to door, collecting candles which they burn day and night before the images. There is one procession after another without any let-up. For two months the air is filled with incense, explosions and artificial fire. It begins at Amalfi, then goes to Minori, Atrani and Conca where they have St. Anthony of Padua in the procession, Ravello and Scala. It comes to Positano, that's my place, and Maiori the same day, for the two villages have never been on good terms and have been rivals in everything for thousands of years. Then . . . What was it I wanted to tell you, my son?"

"You were going to tell me something sad," said Baccio, alarmed.

"That's true. That's what it was."

Again he rubbed the end of his nose, heaved

a great sigh and went on. "Well, these festivals . . . What I mean to say, my son, is that you can make a lot, on the coast at Salerno, between the first of July and the grape-gathering. That's where I make my biggest profits, and it's during those two months that I put a little money on the side, for I can eat or drink well only according to what I take in at this time. It's there that I have my best reputation for playing the bells. They wait for me to play them on saints' days as if I was a great master of the sweet sounds. You realize, my boy, that I can't afford to offend those villages or to turn down the earthly goods my industry gains me in a place where I know all the secrets."

"I do realize all that, my good friend, and I'll follow you wherever you want me to."

"It's not that," said Salvatore, shaking his capacious skull. "Though that section produces all kinds of things without anybody's giving a second thought to it, there's nothing there that will help you in your work. There are neither libraries, nor archives as you call them. There are just villages of poor people, who get their living from the sea and the soil, and don't worry

their heads about history or the things that interest you. Besides, it takes all my time watching the paths Dame Fortune walks on, for she, too, is a nymph with a golden girdle, my son. So I must . . .”

“You’re not thinking of leaving me alone, my friend?” Baccio interrupted. “I won’t work any more if I’m left to myself. You know very well that I can’t earn my living and work on my Index at the same time.”

“Come here till I hug you, my beloved son. How could you imagine that I’d desert you? Don’t you know you’re the apple of my eye, my own right hand? If I talk to you this way, it’s because there’s nothing dearer to me in the world than you and your book. I’m carrying it on my back,” he said, slapping the sack, “and I’d carry you with it around the world. I have no thought but to see you finish it in the peace of mind that’s necessary for it. And it’s a little on my own account, too, because you’re going to put my name on it, like the pope’s.”

“I’ll do anything you want, my friend,” said Baccio in a trembling voice, “but you know very well that I’m lost when you’re not near me,

and that, without you, I can't find the peace of mind you speak of."

"Listen to what I've been thinking, my son." He told Baccio that he had a sister not far from there, at Sicaso, by the sea. She lived in a little house, on the slope of a hill, in the midst of olive groves. "You can't imagine a pleasanter place, nor a better woman than this widow. Rest easy, my son, she's more than fifty and cares for nothing in the world but her kitchen and her birds.

"You'll work amidst a thousand twitterings, for she has birds of all species, in all kinds and shapes of cages, red, yellow, green and black. Especially, one blackbird whose name is Titino, and who imitates all the others. The place is about a hundred yards around. You go down by a sunken road of brick. The first house you come to belongs to a shoemaker who's so deaf and dumb that all you ever hear from him is the tap of his hammer on the stock, never even a snatch of song. Of course, there's Captain Barachini, whose garden is next my sister, Christinella's. But he's a peaceable man, who hasn't made a sound since he left the Two Hundred Tenth Battery, which he commanded."

"I'll certainly be happy there, my friend, if I could be happy anywhere away from you. But, as you know, I can't work without documents. I'm not writing a romance where there's nothing else to do but write down your fancies, and which requires no more baggage than an imagination. But my work is no child of fancy. It's a question of history, that is to say, of exactitude. I can't describe the origin of the Navageri of Venice (who I believe come from Crete) if I haven't examined the records of the place."

Salvatore looked gravely at his friend and plunged his index finger up his nose, doubtless in an effort to find the expression he wanted.

"My son," he said at length, "I'm only an ignorant man. I don't know very much about books or the way they're written. But I do know life, and I think that in spite of all differences, making a book is something like making a hat, a carpet, a boot and so on. I mean that you make a boot according to other boots which have been in the world before it, and a book according to other books. It may be a question of more or less, which I don't understand because I don't know much, but which you should see clearly.

I'm sure, when I think of it, that all the histories I've read, I've always read somewhere else. I mean there was nothing new in them, except the way they told things. In your case, it's even worse, for since the histories of all these great families are true, they are always the same. And, if it happened that some other educated man like you had made the researches you're making, he'd have found what you're finding. All you have to do is take from his book what you'd have taken where he took it, and act as if you'd found it, for when you've put it in the words that come from your own heart, it won't be the same thing at all, and people will only see the fire you put in it. . . ."

"Friend! Friend!" cried Baccio, "what are you urging me to do?"

"What I say is good sense, my son. You know I haven't got my equal for playing the bells. I have a whole pack of tricks for moving the clapper, just touching the rim, striking the bell on one side or tolling it in full swing, that I make use of when I need to. Well, my son, those tricks I got from Graziano Falcone, who was a famous bell-player in his day, and who played

the bells for our late king, Victor Emanuel, when he entered Venice after the liberation. But when I swing the bells high up in the bell-towers, and make them clang till they vibrate, nobody thinks of Graziano, because it's my happiness and my sorrow that I put into the music. So they hear nothing in it but me myself. Everything I know I got from Graziano, but I don't do it like him, because I am Salvatore Palumbo, a man with a head, lungs, belly and a lover's scepter that's not Graziano's. And I tell you, my son, that it's all one to me that Graziano and so many other good bell-ringers played the bells before me and handed me down their trade. For now I delight men by playing the bells as the great dead players did. Anyway, my boy, that's why I think you ought to write books by taking what the masters have left and adding to it your own heart and soul."

"Ah, my friend," exclaimed Baccio, with tears in his eyes, "you do know more than I!"

"What's that you're saying, my son! I don't know anything but what life has taught me, that's the same as saying nothing that matters. While you, you're a scholar, and you know the

grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather of every important personage. So remember, that everything you take from somebody else, you could have found for yourself. You don't have to take into account the ideas that are given you, since, after all, those which you use in your book will simply be rescued from the oblivion of ignorant men like me, and we are legion! See if there isn't some author who would be worth consulting in your room while I'm scurrying around the festivals in my part of the country."

Baccio reflected. "There's the work of Count Pompeo Litta, published by Giusti, in Milan, a century ago. But the thirty folio volumes that make it up are almost impossible to find."

"There's nothing that's impossible for me to find!" replied Salvatore. "It wouldn't be worth the bother of having good comrades in all lines if I couldn't ask them for the moon, the stars, and their light in a bottle on occasion. You'll see, my son, in less than a week from now, those thirty volumes will be standing within your reach on a shelf, at my sister Christinella's. There you'll have plenty of raw material to turn

into beautiful ideas. And that will be much better for those birds called readers, anyway, who nearly all take after linnets or canaries, because they haven't any more brains than they."

Baccio wanted to laugh, but he didn't have courage when he thought that he would no longer tramp the roads beside his friend, would no longer hear him expound that essential wisdom which teaches us, better than books, the habits of men.

"What you say is true, my dear Salvatore, but if I'm not to see you for two months, I won't have a chance to discover the enchanted gardens. I know very well that that involves more luck than initiative, but if I never go away from home, how do you expect me to meet Erigone?"

"I've thought of that, my son, and you can believe that I wouldn't travel through my part of the country without visiting the gardens there. There are some very beautiful ones in the country around Ravello and Sorrento, and what you've told me about the trees and the flowers makes me think that perhaps that's where your nymph has her home, for there isn't a place on earth more filled with flowers. The tiniest seed

the wind blows thrusts up a bouquet in some hole in a wall. As for recognizing the enchanted gardens, we've talked about them so often that I couldn't mistake them two leagues away, though my eyes were bandaged and I had wax in my nostrils. Besides, nothing will prevent me from visiting the country around Sicaso, where there are hills and beautiful trees. That's unless your gardens themselves are wandering across Italy, and we've been looking for them in vain."

"Be quiet! Be quiet!" exclaimed Baccio. "I've thought of that several times and I've gone as numb as if I were about to die."

"Be assured, my son, I'll find them or I'm not Salvatore Palumbo. And I *am*, as much as ever I can be. That's how I've always lived. But I'm talking twaddle, my young friend, and never stopping to think that it's the last time in a long while that I'll be walking beside you, with your book on my shoulders. I've got a feeling, though, that I won't have the courage, and that as far as Naples, at least, I'll take the fastest train I can get. You pick up excellent money there, playing the accordion in the lobbies and selling relics of St. Hasdrubal (a saint that I fished out of the

sky) who watches over railway accidents. I take my seat among the passengers and turn the conversation on accidents. (Over there's Ancona, and behind that mountain to your right, is Sicasco.) Little by little, I see my people begin to tremble with fear, turn from red to white, and from white to yellow, and yellow to green. (If you don't mind, my son, let's sit down.) At that point I take out my relics. I can tell you in confidence that they are bits of chop bones, old teeth and hair that I take from my girls' brushes. (Mount Conero! It's not so high, but it cuts a pretty good figure in the landscape.) They throw themselves on the blessed remains of St. Hasdrubal, and I sell my little bones at a good price, you had better believe, for they preserve this dear, sweet life which might otherwise be lost in the least smash-up. So that's what I'll be doing when I'm no longer with you, my son. . . ."

They were sitting, side by side, on the embankment at the roadside, above Ancona, which lay spread out on the slopes. The port, between the scissor-like arms of its jetties, was crowded with masts, sails and smoke plumes. The town seemed hung about the two hills that framed it,

like a garland of pink and white flowers, bathed in light. Now and again, in the sun-filled silence, a cannon would be fired from the fort, and the sound would rumble for a long time among the hill-tops.

Salvatore had stopped speaking. The two friends stared at the town and at the sea, particularly the sea, with all that it signified as the great unknown, in their vagabond dreams. Little by little, as they thought how they would no longer tramp the roads together, they felt sadness creep over them. They did not say anything. They sat hand in hand, and sometimes, without appearing to do so, squeezed them hard, to feel that they were still together.

CHAPTER XII

Cleope

THE house was very much as Salvatore had described it,—pink, with brilliant green shutters, and built on the mid-slope of a hill that was covered from top to bottom with olive-trees. An arbor of vines led from the iron gate to the entrance, which two hortensias framed symmetrically. As it was July, they were covered with mauve clusters which hung, swaying, among the shiny leaves. Under a vine-clad pergola, a garden of flowers surrounded the house, forming a terrace that overlooked the silvery billows of olive-trees, and from which one had a glimpse of the sea, spotted with boats and many-colored sails.

The Captain's house could be seen, too, behind a yellow stone wall. It was high, square, and painted crimson. A passage about three feet wide and paved with bricks separated the two gar-

den gates. It was proudly called Twentieth of September Street, in memory of the consecration of national unity.

Beside Christinella's door, Titino, the black-bird, was sitting in a square cage. He had a yellow beak and eyes (you could see only one eye at a time) and whistled from morning till night. As a substitute for his own, he imitated, with the skill of a plagiarist, the songs of all the other birds in the house, canaries, greenfinches, linnets, siskins, grosbeaks, goldfinches, and a beautiful creature, blue as the summer sky, that a sailor had brought back from Brazil.

There were somewhat fewer, perhaps, than Salvatore had said (for he was given to hyperbole), but they occupied all the time that Donna Christinella could spare from the kitchen, whether she was changing the seed and sand in their cages, or amusing herself by listening to Titino's imitations, for the public always prefers bad copies to the sincere art of good singers.

Baccio, whose preference was for natural expression, adopted two canaries crossed with linnets, one of which he named "Wake Up," because it always sang at dawn, the other, "Good

Night," because its song began at nightfall. They were quite tame, would hop about his room, and come to eat out of his hand when he shook a little bell. Though the window was always open, they never attempted to fly away and, at evening, returned of their own accord to their cages. While Baccio was working, they would perch upon his heap of books, warbling their songs, no doubt to encourage him to do well.

He wrote an account of the Acquavive of Naples and the Ottoboni of Venice, from the works of Pompeo Litta, which Salvatore had unearthed in three days, with the exception of the eighth, eleventh, nineteenth and twenty-third volumes; they were missing from the set. The other twenty-six, in various bindings, were lined up against the wall, on the floor, for they had been unable to find a shelf big enough, or a plank strong enough, to hold them all.

He was especially sorry not to have the eleventh volume, which, according to the general index, contained the genealogy of the Foscari. He remembered having spoken several times with Erigone of that blood-stained and lustful family, and having drunk wine, that last night,

from their ancestral vines. Memory gave him an attachment for that illustrious name. He resolved to study them from their origin to the extinction of their line.

He never ceased to carry in his mind the image of Erigone. The oftener he conjured it up, the more fabulous it seemed, analogous to those great lovers he had met with in books. There was really nothing actual left about her. Little by little, she was reverting to that great mythological legend whence she had sprung to receive the love of a man. But in that man's heart she had left such boundless ecstasies, such imperishable joys, that he could not, so he thought, experience any delight that did not come from Erigone. He awaited her return with so much fervor that his hope became, to some degree, a part of his being and functioned tranquilly, like a natural faculty.

For several days, he explored the country around Sicaso to discover the enchanted gardens. Then he returned to his work table, where he anticipated, not exactly a miracle, but the termination of his present state of existence, for he thought so much longing must recall his mis-

tress from the unknown realm where she was hidden.

No doubt, Salvatore would find the gardens in the country he was passing through. His letters were few and short. He lost all loquacity when he had to write. Baccio could picture him doing battle with his pen against words which he knew how to charm better than a bird-catcher, when it was only a question of talking. His notes were limited to brief indications of his whereabouts and affairs, and always ended with a goodly number of postscripts, in which he mentioned his searchings and their momentary unsuc-
cess, together with his entire confidence in the future.

"As soon as I've found them, you can come to join me and we'll go to your nymph together. In the meantime, I send kisses for both cheeks."

"Salvatore."

"P.S.—I have been told of a castle with a very beautiful garden, beyond Agerola. I'll go there tomorrow. A big hug for you."

"Salv."

"P.S.—Ask Christinella how much a hundredweight of lemons sells for in Ancona."

"S."

"P.S.—You can be sure that I'll find them, my son."

"Your Salvatore sends you another hug."

"S."

Baccio's replies were effusive. In them, he poured out all the feelings of his lonely heart, now deprived of both its former joys of love and friendship.

His loved one was gone, his friend had left him. He had nothing but regrets and hopes.

Christinella's garden was full of lilies. Their honied fragrance poured into his room and nearly made him swoon. The murmur of all things, the washing in of the sea, the wind among the trees, all the sweet sounds of life, its perfumes, its brightness, its suspirations, floated about him and lightly brushed his lips when he threw back his head to call Erigone.

"Tsip! Tsip!" chirped "Wake Up," hopping on a table. He recalled Baccio to his work,—the history of Pietro Ottoboni, which unfolded to the accompaniment of quartets. His whole life had consisted of his delight in music. Corelli and Scarlatti had been at his court, while, shaved to resemble a courtesan, he himself had danced the Eurilla ballet, naked, in buskins, and a head-dress of birds of paradise.

Baccio's pen raced across the paper, a kind of tripping merriment animated his sentences. The

more he wrote, the more he forgot his sorrows in the transient joy of composition, while he acknowledged the wisdom in all things of his friend Salvatore, who had taught him the consolation of work.

When he had finished writing, he went down to the kitchen where Christinella was bustling to and fro about the stove, a fan of plumes in her hand. It was not an adornment, but by waving it in front of the embers she fanned the flames according to her culinary requirements.

The whole room was singing like an aviary. On the walls, between the copper pots, which were as dazzling as setting suns, were hung cages, as also in the window embrasures, and under the trellises, in the garden. Everywhere were twitterings, warblings, cooings, so that the house and its shady nooks, according to Baccio, resembled that palace in the village of Cambaya, in the Indian Kingdom of Guzerat, in which there are a thousand chambers, built of precious marbles, and inhabited solely by birds.

"What kind people!" said Christinella, referring to the inhabitants of that country.

"It's because of their religion," Baccio ex-

plained. "They believe that the souls of men who were kind and tender return to lodge in those little bodies. I believe it, too, Christinella, and I think that all the people who loved you, and who are dead, have come to live in your cages and sing to please you."

"Here's Orfeo!" she exclaimed. "He always gets here, as if by accident, just when we're going to eat."

He entered, greeted them without saying anything, sought out a chair, set a fraction of his bottom on it, gazed about him, breathed in the aroma from the pots, stretched out one leg, smiled a little, began by little fits and starts to take full possession of the seat he had selected, wagged his head from side to side, looked at the birds, clucked with his tongue, and let a broad smile gradually irradiate his small person, which was now definitely installed.

Baccio sat down next him. Christinella added a plate, with a shrug of the shoulders to signify her contempt. The two men discussed the day's happenings, the weather they were having, had had and were going to have, what ships had registered with the port officials, and the work each

was doing. Their conversation transpired in a vast silence, for Orfeo, in spite of his name, was a deaf mute, and the new comrades could express themselves only by signs, though intuition served them better, on the whole, than gestures.

Orfeo was the shoemaker whom Salvatore had mentioned. His shop stood about a hundred yards away. He came almost every day about noon to sniff Christinella's pots. He took good care not to understand when she let him know by means of a fervent mimicry that he need expect nothing. In fact, he did not recover his perceptions till, weary of the struggle, she invited him to take a place at the table. As he never uttered a word, he was able to eat that much more. In reality he was a regular chatter-box, and when there was nothing left on his plate, would never stop talking, that is to say, expressing himself by a dizzying pantomime of fingers, hands, arms, head, eyes, mouth, shoulders, back, indeed of his whole body, down to the finest shades of what he meant to convey, and what he actually succeeded in conveying.

He turned himself into a visual vocabulary, and employed it with a varying syntax that was

never in error. He knew how to talk about everything, even political abstractions, and was an expert at retailing the small village scandals which he usually heard of long before those who had ears. Not that he was inquisitive, but he was better able to penetrate the hidden thoughts of men because they could not cloak their intentions from him in deceptive words.

Baccio loved to listen to him. In that way, he learned a wealth of things about human passions and the march of events. Withdrawn into himself, the deaf mute had few prejudices. His opinions were fresh and fearless. He expressed them not without subtlety, and thanks to his abstract language, always in unexpected images.

Baccio went to school to him. In a few days he had learned so well to converse with signs and discernment that he took more pleasure in it than in talking aloud.

After a morning of hard work, he would sit down at his table and read to the deaf man the passages that pleased him best.

Orfeo always gave the appearance of understanding. He grew excited, laughed and cried as if he felt various emotions. Baccio knew quite

well that his sentences were unheard by his auditor, that their sonorities never reached his mind. Perhaps they did reach his heart. Perhaps such people have a sixth sense that lets them understand what they cannot hear, provided only that they love us. Be that as it may, Baccio felt pleased at the enthusiasm aroused by his work. It mattered very little to him that Orfeo could not hear his words, since he found pleasure in them, while Baccio took satisfaction in reading them to him. For did he not have in this spectator the ideal public, one which says nothing, does not listen, but lets you go on talking . . . ?

The reading over, they would go down to the shoemaker's shop, where Orfeo would set himself to work, leaving the big door wide open. Orfeo could say nothing now, for his hands were occupied. Baccio would contemplate the scene in the street.

Against a background of hills, he could see a church with a sea-green front, a little square, paved with limestone, and a column surmounted by a Cross, with the Sponge and the Spear. Before a fountain, in the form of a satyr, spouting water into a little cask, the village girls

crowded with their copper vessels, flasks and jugs. They chattered around the basin while a slender, gushing jet of water filled their containers one after another. Then they grasped them in both hands, set them on their heads, and, standing perfectly erect, their throats swelling out their bodices, one arm raised, the other on their hips, walked off with a serene and graceful gait.

Baccio watched them disappear and compared their attitudes with Erigone's. He did not find her easy air in them, or the indolence of her movements. But their beauty, being more familiar, was not destitute of charm. Like Erigone, they had golden brown feet and slender ankles. Like Erigone, their nudity could be divined through the folds of their dresses. Back amongst his books, Baccio could still visualize the movement of their hips below their immobile bodies.

One morning he was working on the genealogy of the Appiani of Pisa when he heard singing in the yard, almost under his windows, in the direction of Captain Barachini's,—a delicate voice, scarcely formed, but of a delicious freshness. It seemed to sing like the birds in the house. It began to bubble into trills and vocalizations

more joyous than the canaries' or the linnets'. Sometimes a note hung suspended, with a soft quaver.

It was an air of Pergolese's that Baccio had known from childhood.

Every way, every day,
You'll be thinking, you'll be thinking,
Of Serpina, and you'll say . . .

It sounded like a child's round, evolving rather slowly in some garden purer than Baccio himself had ever known.

Ah, poor little one! Ah, poor little one!
Dear was she to me alway.

In the voice was that tender irony which is the very spirit of Pergolese, that divine child who died at thirty from too much love of women.

Dear, dear, in her day, in her day.

"Cleope! Cleope!"

Another voice, the angry one of Christinella, cut short the melody.

"Christinella?"

"Be quiet, the professor is working!"

"No, no, Christinella!" said Baccio, leaning out of his window. "Let her sing!" And looking beyond the garden wall, he perceived the singer.

She was standing on a stone bench of which she was doubtless making a stage. When Baccio surprised her, she did not think to come down; she smiled up at him, tossing back her head and swaying a little, her arms outspread so as not to lose her balance. She was little more than a child, and in her long white silk dress, with its big flowers and short puff sleeves, seemed little more than a doll.

"Please sing, I beg you," cried Baccio. "You don't disturb me in the least."

She opened her mouth, uttered two or three tremulous notes; then, hiding her face with her hair, jumped to the ground and fled. Baccio waited a few moments. Then the song recommenced, farther away, behind the garden trees.

You'll be thinking, you'll be thinking
Of Serpina . . .

He pictured her, hidden amongst the foliage, but watching him through the branches. To

show her that she did not fool him, he waved good-day with his hand. The melody ended in a peal of laughter.

"Who is that?" asked Baccio, in the kitchen.

"That's Cleope, the Captain's niece," said Christinella. "She comes every year to spend her vacation with him. She's going to be a nuisance to you, for she sings that way from morning to night. But I'll see that things are settled . . ."

"For God's sake, don't, Christinella! She makes no more noise than the birds."

"Do the birds disturb you?" asked Christinella, wounded in her maternal love.

"Of course not, my friend. Nothing disturbs me,—neither Cleope nor the birds. I wish that everybody would sing, even Orfeo if he wanted to, for I am as light-hearted as a linnet."

He imagined that this light-heartedness came from his work, but when he was writing in his room, he often raised his head to listen for Cleope's singing. That charming image, in its long dress, on the stone bench, mingled with the blood-stained figures whose history he was writing. He no longer separated her from Erigone. In a way she was her child companion. The whole

difference lay no doubt in that she came from a world alien to the earth, while Cleope was a woman, a child, as he, Baccio, was a man.

Next day he was waiting by the open window when "Wake Up," who was flitting about the room with his companion, suddenly perched on the window-rail, and broke into a series of roulades, then settled on an olive-tree, at the foot of the terrace.

Baccio whistled and called in vain, the bird would not come back. He peeped from time to time as if to mock his master, then hopped along the limbs, swaying to and fro as he preened his feathers. The little bell might have more effect. Baccio shook it a long time at the window. Then it struck him as ridiculous to be playing the chimes that way to the empty air, and, at every move of his hand, he dreaded to hear Cleope's laughter.

He ran to fetch a ladder, and setting it against the olive-tree, mounted softly, while he twittered with his lips to call the bird. "Wake Up" fluttered from branch to branch to meet him, stopping several times to sharpen his bill against the bark. But when he was within reach

of his master, he took flight and lighted a little farther off, warbling for joy and puffing out his throat.

"Ah," exclaimed Baccio in surprise, "he's flown away."

Again he carried his ladder to the foot of the tree and recommenced the maneuver with more prudence, for he saw the little round eye sparkling with naughtiness. But he could not dissemble his intentions and was not quick enough in his movements to prevent the canary from escaping again and fluttering up thirty feet higher, to the top of the tree. The wind gave him his cadence, and he poured forth his song, his little beak open to the light, all his tiny body shaken with ecstasy. When he stopped, the forest birds, who sang without his skill and training, kept up a proletarian chorus.

Twenty times, Baccio renewed his tactics, but always in vain, for the canary, intoxicated with freedom, or perhaps from roguishness, flitted each time a little farther up the slope of the hill till the pursuit reached the top, near the road to Ancona, where a horse-chestnut-tree was growing in the more shady soil.

"Wake Up" hid among its broad leaves, and while his master climbed the ladder, he stopped singing so as not to be discovered. Baccio began to despair and his heart bled at the loss of his bird, when "Wake Up," quitting his leafy shelter, flew toward the road, disappearing among the trees.

Baccio jumped down from his ladder and ran after him, crying, "Wake Up! Wake Up!" as he would to a child.

Cleope!

She was standing in the middle of the road. The passing wind lifted her hair and swelled out her silk dress. She was very tiny. He could have laid her head against his breast, that head of fragrant black hair.

In her hands she was holding "Wake Up." The bird was drawn tightly together in a little ball. Baccio could see its heart beating under its soft downy feathers. Cleope was speaking. He did not know what she was saying: he was listening to the music of her voice. Her hair was so thick that it perfumed the air around her, with the natural sweetness of a young woman's hair. She was so small that he had to bend over

to look at her, which aroused an almost fraternal feeling in him.

Then she spoke. "He loves me dearly, sir. I used to feed him. I used to give him millet paste on the end of a match-stick. When he saw me coming, he opened his beak as wide as a house. They used to call me the 'Mother Linnet.' He wasn't pretty, you know. He was bare almost all over his body, with little claws like a frog's. He was always trembling, except when I held him in my hands. We all thought he was going to die, that is, Christinella and I did. I used to come five or six times a day to warm him up and feed him. You'd never have thought that he'd sing so beautifully. . . ."

She smelt of grasses, of water: she was as fresh as a field. When she stopped speaking, he did not know what to answer. He hadn't been listening to the meaning of her words. "Wake Up" fluttered upon her hands. Baccio recalled that certain people have the power of attracting birds. He spoke to her of Francis of Assisi, as the 'Three Companions depict him, at that point in his life when his love of animals turned him to pantheism.

"When he walked on the hill-tops of La Verna, all the birds flew after him. He had a falcon that he used to call his clock, and who came to his door every morning to awaken him, so that he might rise earlier to pray to the Lord . . ."

"Oh, that's darling!" said Cleope, astonished.

They walked slowly, for they did not dare remain in the road, yet did not want to leave it, he, because he was breathing her in deliciously; she, because he told such lovely stories. From time to time, they stopped to look at "Wake Up." Their heads touched above the little bird. Cleope's hair brushed Baccio's hands.

"When he was preaching, under the walls of Alviano, the swallows which abound in that place stopped twittering so that people could hear him better . . ."

The light, falling silvery through the olive leaves, seemed dazzling and purer than water. There were no shadows, or they were so faint that there was no trace of them in the air or on the ground. The brightness seemed to flow in every sense: it seeped into foliage, bark, clothes, flesh. Cleope seemed transparent against an airy background. A tiny thing, tremulous with

purity . . . As they descended the sunken road, between the tree-trunks which seemed made of jasper, a silent creature joined them. It was Orfeo, who was not at all surprised to see them together, so greatly was he preoccupied with his own affairs. He explained to them, with the minutest gesture and a whole symbology in his usual style, that the sports were being arranged for the next day's carnival. There was to be tight-rope walking (he stretched an invisible rope). A ring-game (he tilted at his ring like a jousting). And, best of all, a greased pole (he drew himself up vertically) from the top of which several rabbits would be strung (he made long ears and wiggled his fingers).

Neither Cleope nor Baccio paid the slightest attention to him, so that he was talking to thin air, for they could only understand him with their eyes. Yet Baccio felt an extreme pleasure at having his companion beside him at that delightful moment. He walked between Orfeo and Cleope; all the aspects of sentiment were about him. He thought of his other friend, of his other loved one, for he had not ceased to love them.

He no longer talked of the blessed St. Francis. Bending toward Cleope, he questioned her about her tastes, her feelings: he sought to touch that little virginal soul with his finger.

She liked animals very much. She had two cats and some goldfish. No, she didn't read much. Books bored her.

She is charming!

She adored music.

Beethoven? Schumann?

No, Scarlatti, Sperendio, above all, Pergolese!

She could sing the *Mistress Servant* all day!

She is young, she is fresh! He would have liked to listen to her sing it, his head on her knees, no longer knowing all that he knew. . . . It is so futile to know things.

Orfeo, on his part, announced, one by one, with flourishes of his head, the sports that were to be held at the festival. They did not see that he was speaking. They were altogether taken up with finding out one another through their words. Yet so talkative was the deaf man that he continued to soliloquize with his head and arms like a semaphore on a desert coast.

They loitered as they drew near the villa.

Cleope played with the bird. Baccio wanted to see her again, the next day, that same day even, but he did not dare ask her anything more than to sing sometimes in the garden. There were so many things he wanted to tell her, things that he would not tell her. Several times she began a sentence that she did not succeed in completing. She handed him the bird.

"I would like, sir . . ."

"Call me Baccio, won't you? We've been neighbors so long. Yes, we have, don't laugh, Cleope."

She blushed, glanced at him from under her lashes and fled. Baccio felt happiness hugging him to its breast. He smiled.

There was a letter for him:

"My son, those gardens don't give me a moment's rest, but, by the sacred word of Salvatore, I'll find them! I'm even more sure of it than ever, for I thought I'd found them already. They told me at Baronissi about some gardens which belonged to a widowed lady. Tall and blonde, they told me, like your nymph. I dropped everything to go and see them and they really are extraordinary gardens, at least, as much as I could see of them. Unfortunately, the name of the lady is not Erigone but Isabella, with an English surname, that I didn't understand. They threw me

out for trespassing. All the same, I know enough to know that those aren't them though they look like them. But you see that we may come on them all of a sudden and that we mustn't despair. I'm growing rich, my son, for I'm selling little images made from beams of the stable in Bethlehem, for a Greek concern in Beirut. I sell a lot of them as they keep the vines from blight. They're as good as sulphate. . . ."

She dwelt amidst her gardens! She was somewhere in one of her gardens! She was walking in the midst of her flowers and statues. Silence surrounded her like a sacrament, emanating from everything about her. At every movement she made, the little bells on her bracelet tinkled sweetly. She was seated in her pavilions, in her grottos, beneath her clipped trees. At the moment when the sun floated like a spiritual flame above, might it not be that Erigone thought of Baccio . . .

"Whatever happens, remember always that I love you, never forget that. . . ."

Every way, every day,
You'll be thinking, you'll be thinking
Of Serpina . . .

The song ascended with the scent of the vines.
All the birds in the house accompanied it with

their trilling, and "Wake Up" sang loudly in his cage beside "Good Night."

Baccio ran to the window just in time to see a white dress disappear behind a tree. It seemed to him as if the branches of that tree suddenly burst into flower!

At table when he had eaten and been served his grappa, a brandy that is very soothing to the palate, Baccio sat down beside the deaf-mute and, because he was sure of making himself understood, said to him, "My silent friend, my heart hurts me with its throbbing. I want to run, to swim, to recite verses I have forgotten, at the top of my lungs."

The deaf-mute raised his hands to heaven like a man in ecstasy, folded them again upon his breast, clasping them against his heart, while he rolled his big eyes like a tenor before a balcony at the opera.

"You are right," said Baccio. "I'm more in love than ever. Love is growing in my heart. I don't mean that it has changed its form, my friend, but its forms have multiplied."

Orfeo put both his hands to his lips, covered them with kisses and blew them right and left,

with a little bow in either direction and a smile of perfect impartiality.

"Don't think that," Baccio replied. "I don't believe that any man has love enough to share between two women. I even think that we can love only once. We are granted but one earthly life and one love. We always love the same woman. We are always seeking her in others until we have found her. And though we appear to love others after her, it is really she we are loving in her successors. Don't look so questioningly at me," he continued, his finger-tips closing Orfeo's astonished eyes. "In Cleope I love what reminds me of Erigone's childhood. For the day I first saw Erigone, she was smiling like a child. I can see her still," he cried, throwing back his head. "She is standing before the black door, under the tall trees. We can hear nothing but our own breathing. Then she moves her hand. Her bracelet tinkles . . ."

Speaking of Erigone, he thought of Cleope, and the emotion made his tears flow. The deaf man kept his eyes shut: he had no further need to listen, for he knew what song his friend was singing.

Baccio did not see Cleope again that day, or the morning of the day following, though he moved his table to the window in order to be able to watch the garden without leaving his work. After lunch he saw Barachini pass, on his way to the carnival. Almost immediately, he needed a book he had lent the Captain, and went to the villa to ask for it.

As he had hoped, he found Cleope on the terrace. She did not appear surprised at his visit, but asked him to be seated.

"My uncle has just gone out," she said. "Do you want him?"

"No, or rather, yes. It doesn't make any difference," said Baccio, not wanting to bind himself.

"If I ask her for my book," he thought, "she'll give it to me and I'll have to go."

He dug deep in search of something to say, but couldn't think of anything. Now and again, she raised her head and looked at him with a pensive air.

"How serious you are today!" he declared solemnly at last.

Behind her, against a deep red wall, was a

border of lilies in full bloom. Her child's face seemed vivid against their transparency, and assumed a supernatural brightness.

"Can it be," said Baccio, suddenly inspired, "can it be that your name is Maya?"

She laughed as she leaned toward him. "Maya? Why Maya?"

"She's a siren I saw one evening, at Sestri, in the province of Genoa. She resembled you, Cleope."

There was nothing about the young girl to suggest the undine who had been fair and naked, disporting in the waves. But he thought that in pleading this resemblance, he might be able to let slip all those words he did not dare say.

"She was very beautiful," Baccio continued. "I was sitting in a hollow in the rocks and could see her without her seeing me. She let herself toss gently in the waves and swam from ledge to ledge . . ."

"That couldn't have been me," Cleope interrupted. "I don't know how to swim."

"Evidently it wasn't you. But I could very well have thought . . ."

Love had taught him nothing. He knew no

more than before how to talk to a woman. Not daring to raise his eyes, which would have betrayed his feeling, he sought out minute geometric figures in the pattern of the tablecloth, and pursued them throughout the design. When the wind blew, they could hear the noises of the carnival and the plaint of the merry-go-round, as melancholy as the joys of poor people.

Ah, that halting music, he had heard it in his heart once before, one evening at nightfall . . . an arbor in a little garden at an inn . . . stars amongst the branches. Salvatore listening . . . a history of love . . . a history of regrets . . . Erigone's promise . . . Erigone the beloved . . . the only beloved . . . Mournful iteration! Wasn't there a carnival organ at the bottom of all memory? "Remember always that I love you . . ." she had said. Oh, lovely face, sad at the sound of that music. . . . Erigone! Oh, Erigone!

"Did you ever meet any other sirens?"

It was Cleope speaking. Her bright face recalled him. The lilies made a pure aureole about her. The air was full of birds and trembling leaves.

"Oh, I've often seen them," exclaimed Baccio,

quite happy to find himself back on such comfortable ground. "I've seen crowds of them, pursuing one another through the waves. I've seen many things that other men think miraculous because their eyes are not fixed upon the mystery of life. Several times I've met centaurs, hunting, or galloping for their own pleasure. And nymphs! Nymphs who live in the bark of trees, and others who are the souls of woods and gardens . . ."

The organ ground out memories and regrets.

"I knew one in particular. It was in the most beautiful garden in the world, which must have been made just to please her. She was tall and fair, with a royal air . . ."

The simpler music had cadences that made one weep.

"Her name was . . . was Erigone. . . . Doesn't the very sound of that name make you weep? Erigone! Erigone! She wore no jewelry, except on her wrist"—he took Cleope's hand—"a slender gold bracelet . . ."

Cleope, too, wore a gold bracelet on her wrist. Baccio was not surprised, for he continued to dream aloud to her of Erigone.

"Hers was like this. It was a single band against her skin. But it had four little bells, shaped like chalices, on rings."

"Oh, that must have been pretty!" cried Cleope.

"You could have your bracelet made that way," said Baccio seeking in his new love only the memory of the old.

"I would like to do it, but I don't dare . . ."

She lowered her head and blushed. "My fiancé gave it to me."

"You mean you're engaged?" groaned Baccio.

Suddenly she seemed so much a stranger to him that he really thought he had never loved her. Obviously . . . obviously, she belonged to someone else, belonged to her one true love. It could not be otherwise. It was a law that Cleope should belong to the first man she had loved, as he, Baccio, was bound forever to Erigone.

He realized that there was nothing more to say, that he must get up, start to go, make those adieus that etiquette sent swirling between them with dizzying rapidity, while the flowers all withered, the light faded from the sky and he could not longer see Cleope.

Christinella was waiting at the door for him.

"I have been looking everywhere for you, professor," she said, trembling. "Orfeo has been killed."

Turning, they descended to the shoemaker's house. He had fallen from the greased pole and had fractured his skull against a post. They had laid him out in a corner of his shop, among his forms and pieces of leather. His face was drawn and silent, for the first times, horribly so. People jostled in front of the door to see the dead man and the deep wound that had gashed the skin behind the ear.

Baccio had never seen a corpse. He discerned in it only the cessation of all pain, the end of everlasting misery. The soul was moving amidst ethereal scenes. Never more would worry, love, money, or work, torment these remains. As for his own pain, it was doubled, tripled, since now he must go on living without Orfeo and without Cleope.

"Put a sheet over him," he said to those standing around him, "and send for the coroner."

Then he sat down at the back of the shop and remained for a long time without saying any-

thing. Towards evening, he spoke to Orfeo's relatives. "Have a marble tomb made for him, with a large stone and two cypresses at the head. I will pay the expenses."

They had lit the tapers. The shop was filled with their brightness. The door remained open. In its frame faces kept appearing. Now and again, Baccio approached the corpse and lifted the sheet that had been laid over the face. It was falling in rapidly. The jaw had dropped down and was resting on the chest. The eyes remained partially open. When Baccio changed his position, he could see the whites gleaming faintly between the lids.

At nightfall, it began to rain. No one was left before the door. The drops pelted on the door-sill and splashed as far as the feet of the dead man. The tapers continued to burn in the dim half-light that spread through the shop.

Baccio went out and mounted to his room, as though under the influence of some force quite outside himself. His affliction as a man, wounded in friendship and in love, was so great that it seemed to impart a mystic rapture to his entire

person, a sort of doleful inspiration, like that of Job on his dung-heap.

He seated himself at his table, drew from his pocket the handkerchief which never left it, took out the thousand lire note, and slipping it into an envelope, wrote on it: "For Orfeo's tomb."

Then he made a packet of the rest,—the handkerchief that he had soaked with his tears, that he had so often spread under his cheek, on the pillow, before falling asleep,—and the little bell whose silvery sound conjured up so unfailingly the beautiful hours of that beautiful love. He made a packet of these, in a sheet of white paper from his desk, and wrote on it with a trembling hand: "For Cleope's marriage chest."

Then, thrusting aside the beloved relics from which he parted only with a supreme effort, he began to write:

Under the twofold shade
Of these black trees, planted at the gates of death,
Repose the remains
of
Orfeo Luca Mentore Fusco

He was a writer; he could never be anything but a writer. Love, the exaltations of the flesh and of feeling, all that other men met with many times on the roads of life, he would never experience again: Erigone had taken all that with her. Nothing remained for him to do but to seek the illusion of happiness in the byways of self-interest, as men do who are engrossed in some work.

Unseen chance
Removed him from earthly cares
And led him to eternal sleep.

He raised his head. The sun, breaking through the clouds, penetrated his chamber. It was quite filled with sunlight; the walls all gilded, the furnishings bathed in the sumptuous light. "Wake Up," after shaking his feathers and rubbing his bill on his perch, stepped forth from his cage, as he did each morning, to welcome the new day.

Shameful speech never issued from his mouth;
Silence has reclaimed her silent son.

Then the bird, crossing the room in one joyous flight, settled on Baccio's head. There, while

his master composed the epitaph, he began to sing. Never had such trills, such silvery bursts issued from his little throat. His whole body was atremble with joy, all his feathers were quivering. His song vibrated in the rays of sunlight, was amplified by them. Then Baccio understood that Orfeo's soul, free at last of his mute envelope, was singing, singing in the body of the bird, was glorifying life and light.

"Erigone!" he cried. "Erigone! Shall I never see you again?"

He began to sob, his face in his two hands, while "Wake Up" perched upon his head, continued to sing into the sunlight.

CHAPTER XIII

The Index

"Come get me, my kind friend," Baccio had written. "I don't want to stay here any longer. I have touched the bottom of grief. In one day I have lost the man who consoled me for your absence and the woman I loved. For I love her, Salvatore, and through her I have found that there can be another love than Erigone's in the world. I suffered more from learning this, my friend, than from all the rest. Those poor mementos of Erigone that I kept, that spoke of her to me every day, suddenly lost their soul. Now I have nothing left but you, but you alone, and my book, my poor book, on which some strange fatality has weighed ever since I undertook it. Come, my dear friend! I want to leave this dreadful place. I want to wander with you on the roads, to share your beautiful adventurous life. When we remain long in one place, we see our friends die and the women we love engaged to other men. . . ."

FOUR days later, Salvatore knocked on the gate, greeted Titino, the plagiarist, embraced Christinella, pressed Baccio to his heart, ate at least two

pounds of spaghetti, drank in the same proportion, stowed away the manuscript of the Index in his sack, and the two companions, after snuffing the wind, set off by the road which runs along the sea toward Ancona and Senigallia. Baccio carried nothing, unless it were his load of melancholy: Salvatore was bent beneath the burden of his literary luggage, but happy enough at seeing his foster-child once more.

"You've been working, my son, I can tell from my shoulders. Your book wasn't half as heavy when we came to Sicaso. It's a pleasure to feel your load of noblemen and noble ladies and their noble wenches, growing. Nothing feels so good as to lug them about on my back. Carrying so much wisdom, it seems to me that I'm becoming wise. That's what the mule thinks who carries the doctor's books. . . ."

He wanted to make his friend laugh, but Baccio did not laugh. He turned several times, as they were climbing Mount Conero, to look down at the village and its gardens, which were disappearing bit by bit behind the olives. He could still see the Captain's red house, set on its terrace, midway of the slope.

"What makes you sigh, my son?" asked Salvatore.

"I'm sighing, my friend, because I am tired of loving and suffering for love."

"I know how great your suffering is, my son, and I'd see all women to the Devil, to be able to help you."

"There is no help, Salvatore. I was born to love as others are born to war, or to commerce, or some other form of activity. But that does not mean that I was born to happiness, even to the happiness of a day, for I can find pleasure neither in desire nor in its fulfillment. I thought I knew all that is to be known of love, knowing Erigone. A slip of a child has showed me that I know nothing. So I can live through another amorous experience! My heart is not yet full enough! New distresses await me on the roads, and every step I take brings me nearer the bitterness of love. Ah, my friend, I wish I were old enough to enjoy the peace of impotence! But I don't hope to lose my desire to love even with my power to satisfy it. I know very well that my destiny is pitiless and that everything I can do to wrench

myself free of the passion that possesses me will only tighten my bonds of slavery."

"You must work, my son," said Palumbo once again.

"I know, Salvatore, I know very well. It's sheer joy when one can give one's self to it completely. I would like to belong to that race of men who have no other desire than to complete work they have once began,—men of ambition, politicians, patient creators, philosophers,—all furiously determined to solve some problem. . . . That's how I would like to be, and that's how, at times, I imagine I am. But all that's needed is a woman singing under my window, the fragrance of her hair and skin, some adorable crease in her neck, the tinkle of her ornaments, for me to become again the man my fate has made me, for me to be once more in love with love, with love. Do you understand what I mean, my gentle friend? In love with love, and not with any particular woman."

"I do understand, my son, and I have no hope of converting you to my comfortable little cult, which is to have a good time with all the girls you can, and to give no more thought to it when

it's over than you do to the little glass of Marsala you empty. But your head cramps you too much in this business. Me, I'm no more than a blockhead, so I take the little chits as they come, and go off satisfied when the song is ended. It suits me very well, and most likely it suits them, too (I've told you why). But I must say now, once and for all, that your unlucky habit of falling in love saves you from a still worse fate. For if you didn't fall in love, you wouldn't be what you are, and I wouldn't love you as I do love you. You'd probably write a lot more books, filled with much more learned things, but you wouldn't write them as you write them now. You wouldn't make your fine men and women, all your fine nobles, with their fine beds, live as you make them live now, because you put into them what you have in your own blood, my son, in that blood of yours, that's as red and sparkling as the Bologna lambrusco that we'll be drinking soon, God willing."

In this way Salvatore sought to console his friend Baccio, on the road by the sea-coast.

They trudged along for several days, eating and drinking only at inns, for Palumbo had sold

so many Bethlehem mangers at the festivals, that he was as gluttoned with gold as a landlord, and had no need to ply any of those little trades of his. The two friends could consider themselves like the gentlemen in the ballad, with not a care for the morrow.

They made no stops until Forlì, where Baccio wanted to study the Donna Catarina mentioned by Machiavelli. Then, laden with this new luggage, they continued to wander across the great river plain to Bologna which they reached at the season of the new vintage.

Baccio worked in the library of the Archiginasio or in the Poggi Palace which is richer in manuscripts and archives. He would spend nearly the whole day behind a rampart of volumes which a person with a folio beard kept constantly reënforcing.

Salvatore spent his time peddling his wares to the ladies in "Hell," such is the Dantesque name given in Bologna to the prostitutes' quarter. He carried an oblong box, slung from his neck by a strap, and filled with soap, hair-pins, ribbons, embroidered handkerchiefs, celluloid combs, sentimental post-cards, perfumes, and

rice powder in tin boxes as round and flat as boxes of shoe blacking.

The walls of the Mezzofanti hall were covered with books in vellum, behind gilt railings so delicate that they were lost among the iron binding clamps. Over the door was a plaster bust of the founder, beside a mahogany wall-clock which told the hour, the day, the month, and the sign of the Zodiac. Through the window at the back, a terrace could be seen, with little columns supporting a broad tile roof, the cornice of which was plastered with swallows' nests.

Surbased porticos ran across the house-fronts of "Hell." Its entrance halls were floored with green and white tile, like abattoirs or hospitals. Salvatore went from house to house with his goods. When the madam was stern-eyed, he cringed and scraped and talked to her of her brother-in-law whom he had known in the regiment (there is always a brother-in-law). Then he penetrated the general hall. It was vast and embellished with mirrors, red curtains, and dismal paintings that were meant to be licentious. The girls waited for the men on a wooden bench, at one end of the room. The men sat at the other

end. Between them was the mosaic floor, polished so faultlessly that it reflected the electric lights.

The silence in the Mezzofanti library was so deep that one could hear the ticking of the clock and the worms at work in the pages. The man with the folio beard was dozing at his desk. When Baccio closed a book, he would start up, blink, and then subside again into the tedium of the hours. Baccio was not alone. It seemed to him that one or the other of his two loves watched him constantly as he read and wrote up the annals of the Ludovisi. Occasionally, he would scribble Erigone's name on a margin.

"Listen, darlings," said Palumbo, from the midst of a group of women, "I'm not your lover today, but I bring you a hundred and twenty-two little aids to beauty such as no firm in Paris has to offer."

They crowded around him, their pale flesh massed beneath the bright lights which were reflected on it in various hues. They uttered little cries, on seeing the treasures the box contained. A Roman wench, tall and slender, with lips too full and breasts too heavy, kissed Salvatore on

the lips while she called him, "You love! You love!" He lurched, trembling with desire, and between sighs stated the price of his wares.

"I must work," Baccio told himself, "simply to love is not, it seems, reason enough to live. By work, we earn our daily bread and rear up the structure of our glory. So love must be renounced. Nearly all great men have been chaste. Were they great because they were chaste, or chaste because they were great? So when I have finished this book, I must begin another at once, repelling love with both hands, fleeing your memory, Erigone, while I continue my work in abnegation, to die at last without ever having lived!"

They were so pretty in their paint and ribbons. They smelt so adorably of the sharp odor of caresses, that Salvatore was very near to rejecting his great principle of gratuitous love and bartering his merchandise for their kisses. But he thought of Baccio, his beloved son, whom he must support and help onward to glory. He lowered his prices, which he had overstated at first, and dispensed his wares in return for the little bills the girls drew from their stockings.

That is how they lived in Bologna, and later at Ferrara where Baccio worked near the tomb of Ariosto, and Salvatore in the Via Romiti, a street that is forever filled with music and girls in taffeta dresses.

When Baccio had completed the studies that obliged them to stop in the cities, they resumed their tramp along the highroads, discussing themselves and the things about them. But the landscape, with its plowed fields, its brooks and its vineyards, was so monotonous that they preferred to talk of their own affairs and feelings.

Leaving Padua, on the road to Stra, Baccio said to Salvatore, "I want to finish the chapter on the Foscari, in Venice. That will be the last. With that, I shall have finished my book, and we can go, if you like, and take it to Signor Mosca."

"Is it really done?" said Palumbo, trudging along with difficulty under the weight of the manuscript.

"It's done, Salvatore, and soon, since you are its godfather, you can go present it in the sad baptistery of publication."

"I am very happy about it, my son, very happy!" Salvatore exclaimed, rubbing his hands and smiling from ear to ear. "Now we are going to stand together forever, for you told me that you would put my name beside yours on the title-page. And, years from now, when some man like you takes up your book, he'll see Baccio Cardi and Salvatore Palumbo, hand in hand, wishing him good luck before he begins. If you don't mind, my son, we'll send a copy to my mother so that she can see that. Of course, she doesn't know how to read, poor thing, but some neighbor will show her the place on the page where your name and mine are written, and you can very well believe, my son, that she'll be happy."

"We'll do that," said Baccio, embracing him.

For the first time he understood what the word "glory" means.

"I can't believe it . . . is your book really finished?"

"Just as I told you, Salvatore."

"Finished, finished, absolutely finished!"

"All but the last chapter on the Foscari, which I want to complete in Venice. But it's only a

question of one or two days. Beyond that, I have only one desire: to be done with this 'Index.' ”

“I understand, my son, and that’s just what I wanted to talk to you about. Probably you’ll say, ‘Salvatore is a gabby old jackass.’ But I like to explain to you what I think sometimes. When I saw you writing all these pages and pages,—(so that if I wasn’t a sturdy scoundrel, by God, I’d have to hire a horse to carry them)—I was all admiration, not just because the stories in it are very nice and very well told, but especially because of the courage it must have taken to write all that in spite of everything that’s happened. When I stop to think, my son, how I wet my pants over nothing more than having to write a two-page letter, I feel like kissing your hand, I feel such a poor little pimple of a man beside you.”

“Nonsense, my friend, it’s all a matter of habit, like everything else.”

“Oh, I know very well. I’m not speaking of using a pen as a mason uses a trowel. Jesus, how mad I get not to be able to say things the way they are inside me. I’ve got it! I think (of course you’ll say I don’t know anything, but let it go

at that) that what we've got to admire in this, that or the other man, I mean like Dante or Carducci, is that they wrote good and beautiful things that they teach in school, but still more that they had the power to sit down in a chair long enough to write them. When I stop to think that to write the *Inferno* and all the rest of it, that poor fellow had to sit on his bottom for all those pages, I get corns on my backside just imagining it!"

"Maybe he wrote standing up," said Baccio as he burst out laughing.

"All right, all right, my son, I see that you're making fun of your poor Salvatore. Still that's not what I wanted to say. But wait a second, I think it's coming . . ."

The country around them made a splendid scene. On either side of the highway willows, planted in rows like a checkerboard, supported the vines whose leaves, turned golden or crimson by the autumn, still clung to the stems, which looped from tree to tree like garlands. In places, the vines crossed the road on reed trellises. The two friends trudged along, in the festive light, beneath these dionysiac festoons.

"You realize, my son," Palumbo continued, "that these fellows I've been talking about, while they wrote things that we admire, missed all those good times we enjoy when we live without doing anything. Every time that Dante locked himself up in his room to write, he missed seeing God's good sun or the pretty little lass picking grapes, he missed hearing the little birds, he missed drinking good wine that puts warmth in your belly and limbs. In short, my son, he passed up a whole heap of happiness that would never come again. And even if I am stupid, I tell you that you've got to admire that (I mean that he gave up all those fine, good things in order to write) more than the things he actually wrote. Yet (and now I know you're going to say I'm a fool) don't you think, my son, that all those things that he didn't see and didn't feel because he was busy writing, might have done him good, and he might have written still more beautiful lines if he'd seen more of the beautiful things of this world?"

"Perhaps, my friend," replied Baccio, feeling suddenly sadder than death itself. "After all, we know nothing of those great souls. But, alas, it's

certain that the most beautiful books will never be written because those mighty spirits who could write them never consent to do so."

They chatted as they walked beneath the vines. The road seemed strewn with golden palms.

Arriving in Fusina, at the landing-stage of the steamer which takes the people of the mainland to Venice, Salvatore said to Baccio, "I don't like that city, my son. It's neither fish nor flesh, and you can't get into it on foot like the others."

He consoled himself as best he could by selling the passengers the chocolate with which he had loaded his pockets at Dolo, for the sack on his shoulders was so full that you couldn't have stuck a pin between the sheets of manuscript.

As soon as they were installed in a little hotel on the Dorsoduro, Baccio repaired to the Zecca, where, in the "Professors' Room," he called for the Golden Book and the documents bearing on the Foscari.

The librarian was a bustling talkative little man who insisted on heaping the table with collections of archives and little cases, the mechan-

ism of whose fasteners he explained at length. Baccio had difficulty in making him understand that he knew almost all there was to know about that illustrious family, at least until the first half of the nineteenth century.

"Oh Lord," exclaimed the librarian, "if you'd only told me that at once. The *Venetian Journal* would have been enough. You'll find in it all the information you need."

In all there were forty volumes, with the figure of St. Mark on their cloth backs. When the librarian had them all piled around Baccio, he disappeared behind the porcelain stove, continuing a soliloquy on a subject known only to himself.

The room was small and square, with a false, painted vault, supporting a scroll on which the lion of St. Mark was holding this charming motto between his claws: *Custos vel Ultor*. Through the grilled windows could be seen the masts of vessels anchored at the Mole, and a huge marine flag that the wind kept unfurled without a wrinkle.

The fourteenth volume related the history and deeds of the Foscari since the treaty of Campo-Formio. It told of the rapid decline of the

glorious family, amidst changes of power which passed Venice from hand to hand. Unskillful courtiers, impoverished by the pomps and debauches of their ancestors, the last descendants evinced none of the glory of the doges, of the provveditori and those gallant patricians who had made their race illustrious by their intrigues, their crimes and their vices.

Baccio saw himself again, on the terrace of the black garden, talking to his loved one of the political passions and loves of that cruel family. Her lovely eyes were illumined that day by so lofty a sovereignty that he had thought he saw in them the reflection of that supernatural world whence she came. And while he told her the fierce, sanguinary stories, her pale face, with its bruised lips, bent so close to his that their kisses put an end to his words.

Ah, the lusciousness of those beloved lips! He cherished it still, not in his own lips only, but pervading his whole body. And then the burning coolness of her teeth and tongue! His whole body still responded to those past embraces. And dreaming of Erigone's caresses and words, he once more enumerated all that had been weirdly

wonderful about her, all that had been unreal, her raptures and half-divine splendors,—a human lover, but a celestial child.

“Whatever happens, remember always that I love you. Never forget that.”

How could he efface such memories from his mind! No love on earth or amidst the eternal music of the spheres was ever so beautiful. What Cleope, with her artless charm, her pale tenderness, her spring-time soul, had been unable to do, no woman could do. All his life long he would carry the image of Erigone in his heart. He would seek throughout the world until he found her again. And if it must be that he would never find her, at least he would seek her until he died.

There was a loud commotion under the windows: gondoliers, no doubt, scuffling for a tip. Then a steamer’s siren uttered a long screech, while the sailing bell clanged on the Dogana.

Baccio pictured the ship, free of its anchors, gliding slowly behind the tug, between the channel markers. There was more of the unknown before that prow than any tramper on the roads could even dream of: seas, islands, harbors,

strange peoples, all that he had never seen of the world and its wonders. For a long while his thoughts followed the voyagers whom he pictured, crowding the decks, with farewell faces and white handkerchiefs. Then he went back to the *Journal*, and, heaving a vagabond's sigh, continued his work.

Not much was said of the last male descendant, Federico Foscari, except that he was poor, kept an antique shop in the Cannareggio, and, from a proud sense of shame, called himself Carifos: he did not renounce his name, but transposed its syllables to conceal his abasement. His only daughter, Isabella Carifos, born in 1877, married one of her father's customers, an extremely wealthy Australian, Percy Bodwen, who, after traveling in Italy, returned with his wife to his own country.

"We have reason to believe," said a manuscript note, "that Lady Bodwen, on becoming a widow after two years of marriage, returned to Italy in 1898, and that she repurchased several of the ancient estates of the Foscari and their connections in Naples, the Acquavive.

"No children are known to have been born to this union."

"So the family is extinct," thought Baccio, who saw nothing more, for so completely did dreams possess him that he was unable to distinguish their transition to reality.

On the last page of his book, on the topmost branch of the Foscari family-tree, he wrote:

Isabella, called Carifos,
married
Percy Bodwen (died 1898).

Beneath, with a question mark to ease his conscience.

Line extinct (?).

Then, without knowing why, he raised his head and stared at the door, for he felt certain, absolutely certain, that Erigone was about to enter. . . .

THE END



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